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ABSTRACT

The papers focus on an overview of current developments, language needs of secondary students, and the status of syllabus and examination changes. In addition to the opening and closing addresses and reports from 15 informal workshops, six papers are provided on such topics as reasons for learning a foreign language (A.R. Clarke and others), the place of foreign languages in the curriculum (P.S. Greers), the implementation of the Institiuid Teangeolaiochta Eireann Modern Language Project in the classroom (J. Sheils), reform in the official curricula and examinations (C. Daly and others), national policy on future reforms (S. O. Conghaile), and a communicative approach to examinations (D. G. Little). (RW)

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INNOVATIONS IN CURRICULUM AND EXAMINATIONS AT SECOND LEVEL

Proceedings of the
National Modern Languages Convention
held at Trinity College, Dublin,
on 29 and 30 January 1982

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Edited
by
Mary Ruane and David Singleton

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TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN
Centre for Language and Communication Studies
1982

NATIONAL MODERN LANGUAGES CONVENTION

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

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Secretary	Mary Ruane
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Representative of the German Teachers' Association	Hertha Stieber
Representatives of the Spanish Teachers' Association	Mary Noonan Bill Richardson Lesley Risk
Representatives of the Association of Teachers of Italian	Elizabeth Delaney Corinna Lonergan
Representative of the Modern Language Teachers' Association	Nora French

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FOREWORD

On 29 and 30 January 1982 the first National Modern Languages Convention was held in Trinity College, Dublin. It was held under the auspices of the Centre for Language and Communication Studies of Trinity College in collaboration with the French Teachers' Association, the German Teachers' Association, the Spanish Teachers' Association, the Association of Teachers of Italian, and the Modern Language Teachers' Association.

Three months after the Convention, with the benefit of opinions and reactions that have come in from many quarters, it is possible to assess its importance for foreign language teaching in Ireland. The general reaction has been overwhelmingly positive and everything suggests that the Convention was an unqualified success. As such, it can be said to have more than exceeded the expectations of the committee who had begun the work of organization early in 1981 and for whom the undertaking to plan the Convention had been something of a leap in the dark.

The idea to hold a Modern Languages Convention was first mooted two years ago. Need was felt in the language associations for a forum to disseminate information and to allow exchanges of views among language teachers on developments currently being proposed for the teaching of languages in Ireland. Given, however, the limited material resources of the associations, the likelihood of such a project materializing was extremely slight. What made the improbable possible was a timely and generous offer from the Centre for Language and Communication Studies of Trinity College to sponsor the Convention not only by providing a venue but also by offering material resources and back-up services. This offer was gratefully and enthusiastically taken up, and an Organizing Committee comprising representatives of the Centre for Language and Communication Studies and the language teachers' associations set to work.

Deciding on a theme for the Convention posed no problem for the Committee. With the imminent prospect of changes in second level syllabuses and examinations in foreign languages the theme Innovations in Curriculum and Examinations at Second Level was an inevitable choice. Two considerations guided the Committee in putting together a programme: on the one hand the limited time available - as the Convention would only last a day and a half - and on the other hand the volume and range of information that had to be communicated. The resulting packed programme attempted to present an overview of current developments indicating some possible language needs of second level pupils, the present state of play in relation to syllabus and examination changes, and some perspectives for the future.

Those present on the first evening of the Convention will remember it as having been stimulating, varied and eventful. The official opening was performed by Mr John Boland T.D., Minister for Education, who in the course of his speech expressed the view that profound changes must come in modern language syllabuses and examinations. In replying to the Minister's speech and welcoming all participants in the Convention Dr W.A.Watts, Provost of Trinity College, paid special tribute to Mr Boland's determination to honour his promise to open the Convention despite the political upheaval of the preceding days. The opening ceremonies were wound up by Mrs Delma O'Callaghan, President of the Modern Language Teachers' Association, who in a very well-received address argued strongly for the employment of more Department of Education inspectors with responsibilities for modern languages. The official opening was followed by the first working session entitled 'Why learn a foreign language?' This consisted of a panel discussion with contributions from speakers representative of, among others, educational, industrial and agricultural sectors on the value and place of foreign languages in the second level curriculum. Any doubts one might have had on this subject were dispelled by the unanimity, the conviction and the sense of urgency expressed by the many contributors to this session.

The question of a framework for language learning in the light of second level pupil needs as outlined on Friday evening was explored by visiting speaker Mr Peter Green, Director of the Language Teaching Centre, University of York, in the key-note paper 'The place of modern languages in the curriculum', which opened proceedings on Saturday morning. Mr Green's lucid and eloquent presentation was undoubtedly one of the highlights of the Convention. The note of optimism struck by Mr Green was echoed in Mr Joe Sheils's paper, which followed. Mr Sheils, Modern Languages Adviser at Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann, spoke on 'A recent project in curriculum development' and outlined the I.T.É. Modern Languages Project, which is now recognized by the Department of Education and is being tested in schools. Mr Sheils delighted his audience by showing glimpses of the possible riches for pupils and teachers alike in language learning materials which encourage authentic communication in the classroom.

The optimism of these papers was in stark contrast to what followed. The next session was entitled 'Reform in the official curriculum and examinations' and presented reports from language teachers' association representatives on progress in implementing the commitment given in 1979 to introduce new foreign language syllabuses and examinations. These reports centred on the developments in the separate

Syllabus Committees that had been promised for each foreign language taught and they showed that, although some progress has been achieved in French, there have been no significant developments in the case of the other three languages. The commitment of the Department of Education to oral examinations and new syllabuses had been reiterated by the Minister for Education the previous evening. It was left to the only full-time modern languages inspector in the Department of Education, Mr S. Ó Conghaile, to show how this mammoth task would be achieved in his paper 'The way ahead'. Mr Ó Conghaile was realistic. He referred to problems of time if the new programmes were to be implemented in 1985, to the finance necessary for implementing the new proposal and to the need for in-service training, which also would required planning and funding. He did, however, emphasize that, whatever the difficulties, the need for change was felt throughout the Department of Education.

It was clear from Mr Ó Conghaile's paper that the absence of an adequate infrastructure to cope with the scale of developments being proposed in foreign language teaching would pose considerable problems. However, the following paper - 'A communicative approach to examinations', delivered by Mr D.G.Little, Director of the Centre for Language and Communication Studies - showed that, if material resources are lacking, a local reservoir of expertise is certainly not. Mr Little, who is chairman of the I.T.É. Modern Languages Project, outlined an approach to language testing based on communicative principles, which he related to the recent findings of second language acquisition research. He suggested that examination tasks should have genuine meaning and purpose beyond the limits of the examination and that they might best be defined according to the type of natural interaction which they sought to imitate.

After Mr Little's paper came the workshops and, at last, an opportunity for participants to react to the issues that had been raised during the Convention. Reports from the workshops were presented by Ms Nora French, who was obviously delighted to be able to state that participants' reactions were in the main extremely positive. The Convention was brought to a close by Dr David Singleton, who in his final remarks pointed to the unity of purpose which seemed currently to exist between the Department of Education and applied linguists and language teachers.

The formal programme is only one part of what happens at a large gathering of professionals. Alongside the lectures, seminars and discussion groups contacts are made, links are forged and information is exchanged. The Lower Concourse in Trinity College's Arts Building was an ideal setting for the

informal part of the Convention programme - large enough to accommodate the two hundred and fifty participants and the publishers' exhibition, sufficiently comfortable to allow contacts to flourish in a congenial atmosphere, and suitably equipped to provide a convenient catering venue for the Convention. For the organization of this part of the Convention thanks must go to Mr David Parris and Mr Sean Feerick, both members of the Organizing Committee. Thanks must also go to the staff of the embassies of the various countries whose languages were represented at the Convention for their co-operation and contributions, in particular His Excellency the Spanish Ambassador, Emilio Pan de Soraluce, Monsieur M.Raynaud, Cultural Counsellor at the French Embassy, Herr B. von Helmolt, Cultural Counsellor at the German Embassy, Mr L.J.Mader, Cultural Attaché at the Canadian Embassy, and Dr A.Tossi, Cultural Attaché at the Italian Embassy.

The only possible regret in relation to the Convention is that, due to constraints of space and finance, there were only places for two hundred and fifty participants. This fact was foreseen very early on in the planning stages and it was perhaps one of the reasons which prompted the suggestion that the proceedings of the Convention should be published. Such a publication, it was agreed, would provide a permanent record of the valuable contributions made at the Convention and would be of particular interest and value to those who had not been in a position to attend. Thanks to an offer from the Centre for Language and Communication Studies to take on the task of publishing and distributing the proceedings this suggestion has now been realized.

The first National Modern Languages Convention was a unique occasion, demonstrating the energy, commitment and co-operative spirit that exist at present among foreign language teachers. We hope that its success can be emulated in the years ahead. For the success of the 1982 Convention thanks are due to the Provost of Trinity College, Dr W.A.Watts, to the Minister for Education and his Department for co-operation and financial support, to the speakers and chairpersons for their valuable contributions, and to the language associations for their energy and efforts. Finally, a very special word of thanks must go to Mr David Little, Director of the Centre for Language and Communication Studies, without whose support and assistance the Convention might not have taken place and this publication might never have appeared.

April 1982

M.Ruane
D.M.Singleton

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I OPENING ADDRESSES

I.i SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MR JOHN BOLAND

A Dhaoine Uaisle,

Tá áthas orm bheith in bhur measc anocht agus ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabháil leis an gCoiste Stiúrtha as ucht cuireadh a thabhairt dom an Comhthionól Náisiúnta seo a oscailt. Ceist an-tábhachtach í teagasc na nuatheangacha agus táim an-sásta a fheiceáil go bhfuil an líon seo múinteoirí toilteanach deireadh seachtaine a chaitheamh ag plé ceisteanna siollabas agus scrúduithe sna hábhair sin. Tá súil agam go mbeidh toradh fónta ar bhur saothar.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be with you here this evening. I wish to thank the Organizing Committee for their invitation to open this National Convention on Modern Language Teaching. The theme chosen, "Innovations in Curricula and Examinations at Second Level", is of particular interest to me at the present time. In the Programme for Government, 1981-1986 one of the commitments given with regard to education is a proposal to establish an Independent Curriculum and Examinations Board. I launched a debate on the Government's intentions in this regard in Seanad Éireann last October. In my speech on that occasion I called for a wide-ranging debate, among all those interested in education, on the related topics of curricula, syllabuses and examinations. This Convention is thus very timely and I feel sure it will make a valuable contribution in the specific area of modern languages. So I would like to place an order here and now for a copy of the published proceedings!

One of the lacunae in the present Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools is that there is no comprehensive statement of the broad aims of second level schooling. A possible reason for this omission may be the extreme difficulty of arriving at an agreed statement of what the nation expects its young people to get from the years spent in post-primary schools. Involved here are not only questions of philosophy, religion, psychology and sociology but also the areas where those disciplines overlap.

I feel that a broadly representative Curriculum and Examinations Board would have to address itself to an overview of the whole curriculum as a matter of priority. At present,

in the Rules and Programme the syllabuses for the various subjects are set out one after the other, without reference to how they fit into an overall pattern. For instance, what is the role played by modern language acquisition in the psychological and social development of the second level pupil? Is it desirable to attempt to define the aims and objectives of modern language teaching, without being first of all clear on the general aims of second level schooling? Do we make sufficient allowance for the fact that before undertaking the learning of a continental language, our pupils already will be coping with two languages?

However, it would be unrealistic to halt all discussion of particular subject syllabuses until a consensus had been reached on the wider issue. In Ireland - and in many other countries as well - there is at present a great deal of soul-searching among those concerned with the teaching of modern languages. Let me give a few examples of what I mean here. The new audio-visual approach placed great emphasis on the oral skills but the will to persevere with this new approach was gradually weakened by the absence of the testing of the oral skills in the Leaving Certificate Examination; the initial training of many teachers did not equip them fully to cope with the new approach - and this in terms of both competence in the oral skills and of methodology; parents were often mistrustful and the universities sceptical. Perhaps there are some lessons to be learnt there by all of us, especially now as we find ourselves again in a time of great change in modern language teaching.

Of course, conditions will never be ideal for the introduction of far-reaching reform; a start has to be made. My predecessor set 1985 as the date for the introduction of a compulsory oral component in the Leaving Certificate Examinations in modern languages, and this decision was understandably welcomed all round. I take this opportunity to confirm that the Department of Education remains committed to that target. Obviously, the syllabuses in modern languages will have to be revised, not only to lessen the present emphasis on the written language but also to take account of what may be relevant to our situation in recent and current developments in syllabus design and language testing. To this end, separate syllabus committees have been set up for the various modern languages and are at present engaged in this work. Members of these committees are nominated by organizations representing the teachers, school management and the universities; the meetings are chaired by a Department inspector. However, the committees may avail themselves of the expertise of non-members by inviting these to their meetings - this has already happened in the modern languages area.

The syllabus committees for modern languages have both a heavy responsibility and a very difficult task. They must try, I feel, to strike a balance between the need for innovation and the resources, both human and material, that are available to implement change. The drawing up of a proposed syllabus does not constitute the only work of a syllabus committee; its function should also include the on-going review of the syllabus in operation and the formation of proposals for its adaptation.

In any case, whatever the time-scale for their introduction, profound changes must come in the syllabuses and assessment of modern languages; and this is the theme of your convention. I would like if I may to mention briefly some other areas where change is required if new syllabuses and assessment systems are to be successful. Five years ago a short but well-written report on training was published under the auspices of the Royal Irish Academy. It suggested that deficiencies existed in the training of future language teachers - in particular in the two fundamental areas of competence in the oral language and of methodology. It may be time for an in-depth study of the entire question of the initial training of modern language teachers.

Of course, no matter how excellent the initial training might be, teachers would always benefit from retraining facilities. Inservice education is needed if language teachers are to be enabled to adapt to the new orientation. It is also desirable that teachers should spend time in the country of the language they are teaching. At present, there are scholarship and exchange schemes in operation; here the cultural sections of the Embassies of France, Germany, Italy and Spain give considerable support, both moral and financial, and this is very much appreciated by my Department. The possibilities of enlarging these schemes could be explored. In particular, the language assistant scheme has proved to be a worthwhile investment; this enables future language teachers to spend an academic year abroad and could be expanded with great benefit to the teaching of modern languages.

The setting up of resource centres for teachers may also have to be explored, for it is very likely that the new language programmes and the appropriate methodologies to teach them will imply easy access to a whole range of authentic materials in the target language - I have in mind such things as newspapers, magazines, cassettes - both sound and video - a selection of specimen text-books. This would seem to be an area eminently suitable for co-operation between the teachers' organizations, the Embassies, the Teachers' Centres, the publishers and the Department of Education.

You are no doubt eager to hear the views of the experts and to get down to in-depth discussion of the many problems confronting modern language teachers at present. It is perhaps a symptom of your awareness that all is not well that you will be examining such basic issues as the justification for the inclusion of modern languages on the curriculum of second-level schools and the relevance of modern languages to the community at large. I have no doubt that your deliberations will lead to positive results and that your conference will give a new impetus to the kind of modern language teaching that will meet the needs of the 1980s. I now declare the National Modern Language Convention open and wish it every success.

I.ii ADDRESS OF WELCOME BY DR. W A WATTS, PROVOST OF TRINITY COLLEGE

Dr Watts welcomed the Minister and participants in the Convention. In replying to the Minister's address he made the following observations:

In the early 1970s, together with representatives of the other universities, I took part in discussions with officials of the Department of Education about the establishment of an independent examinations board. It is important to note that the initiative came from the universities. The universities have not subsequently changed their view that the establishment of an independent examinations board would be the best way to initiate reform in the Leaving Certificate curriculum. The discussions to which I have referred went very far, and the teachers' organizations were involved in considering the possible membership of an independent board. The Department of Education, for unknown reasons, did not proceed with the proposal at that time. We are glad that the Department still appear to be committed to the idea of an independent examinations board.

During discussion of the independent examinations board

the necessity for realistic arrangements for oral examinations in modern languages was mentioned on many occasions. The Department's current commitment to the introduction of such examinations is to be welcomed. It is to be hoped that this overdue development will be implemented without delay.

The organization of this convention is the result of a co-operative arrangement between the modern language teachers' associations and T.C.D. academic staff - in particular, staff from the Centre for Language and Communication Studies. The Centre was established at the time the Arts Building was constructed as a special development supported by the Higher Education Authority. It is concerned with teaching and research in phonetics, linguistics and language learning and is very well equipped technically for the purpose. It is a development area for the College, having already received considerable support, it should be noted, not only from the H.E.A. but also from the Provost's Development Fund, initiated by Dr F.S.L.Lyons when he was Provost.

The University Council has now approved an initiative from the Centre for the establishment of a postgraduate diploma course in Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching. We hope this diploma course will be attractive to teachers who wish to develop their skills and make use of the Centre's equipment and facilities. The course will normally be taught late in the day so as to make is as accessible as possible to teachers.

The Provost concluded his remarks by thanking the Minister for his attendance and active interest even in the circumstances of an impending general election.

I.iii ADDRESS BY MRS DELMA O'CALLAGHAN, PRESIDENT OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Mrs O'Callaghan began her address by expressing - in Irish - her personal gratitude to the Minister for Education, the Provost of Trinity College, the Director of the Centre for Language and Communication Studies and Dr Singleton for their support of the convention. She continued as follows:

Tá moladh speisialta ag dul don choiste a d'eagraigh an Chomhdháil, sé sin le rá, múinteoirí as na cumainn a bhaineann le lodáilis, Spáinnis, Gearmáinis agus Fraincis. Do shaothraigh siadsan le fuinneamh agus le dua, agus beidh sé soiléir ag deireadh an lae amáraigh cé chomh mór atáimid uile faoi chomaoin acu.

It seems to me particularly significant and especially apt that the first National Modern Languages Convention should be held in T.C.D. I say this because in my own fifteen years' involvement in the second level modern languages field in this country I have found the contribution of modern languages staff of this university to be truly remarkable. Not only have they led the way, lent their undoubted academic prestige and maintained our perspectives, as one would expect enlightened academics to do, but also they have bridged the gap between theory and practice, between academe and second level, between policy issues and teaching preoccupations. This they have done and continue to do with the success that accrues from hard work. We salute them, past and present.

This is a time of great vitality, a time of growth and of increasing maturity among Ireland's modern language teachers, and tomorrow's sessions will bear witness to this vitality. In particular, the I.T.E. Modern Languages Project has established a dynamic which has caught the imagination of language teachers of all levels in Ireland and has swept them into syllabus definition, pedagogic materials production and classroom experimentation with an elan that belies our supposed conservative tendencies. This work has earned not only the approval of the Council of Europe experts on the international scene but also the rare accolade of adequate funding from commercial interests at home. This achievement has been inspired by the unrelenting Joe Sheils and Sean

McDermott of I.T.É. Apart from all other considerations it has brought together a coherent group of self-confident professionals of a kind that we have not seen here before. We salute them.

It is the best of times in the modern languages area in Ireland, after what has seemed like endless years of fruitless argument. Oral examinations are being researched, and orals for all have been promised at Leaving Certificate level in 1985. Consequently, Syllabus Committees are back at work, and since good communications exist between the I.T.É. syllabus development groups and these committees, the language teachers' representatives are briefed as never before. It seems likely that innovations in curricula and examinations will be implemented. Proposals for a Curriculum and Examinations Board are being actively promoted, and this means a possibility of unprecedented financing, proper structures, full-time personnel and a consequent prospect of commensurate provision which augurs well. It has become respectable to write theses on areas of applied rather than academic interest, and so new sources of informational support are available, adding to the general atmosphere of sound professionalism. Almost 80 per cent of Irish second level students are taking a foreign language, so the future looks secure ... or does it?

Since only 10-15 per cent of these students will continue to third level at all, and since of these only a fraction will follow courses which lead back to second level language teaching, there is a need to review the relevance, quality and effectiveness of the courses offered at second level. This review is valid if one is merely observing the current drift; it is vital if one is embarking on planning - for diversity or for other reasons. One of the problems is the imbalance as between French and all the other languages, in a situation where almost 90 per cent of all modern language students are students of French. The increase in the number of students taking French has been dramatic since 1964, when classics was dropped and the matriculation requirement became Irish, English and another language. The drift towards French appears to have developed rather from inertia than from a policy or from teacher shortages. Indeed, frequently one finds very poor housekeeping, insofar as teachers well qualified in other languages are forced into teaching French, for which they have no more enthusiasm than qualification. Until administrative support mechanisms are developed to encourage growth of the minority languages, French will continue to encroach on the spread of the other equally important languages. The Royal Irish Academy's National Commission for the Teaching of Modern Continental Languages has been working for some time on recommendations

for such support mechanisms and will, we hope, be making submissions to the Department of Education in due course.

Another area of concern is that some of our best linguists are also able scientists, mathematicians or technicians, and there is great wastage through lack of provision of suitable language courses in conjunction with non-literary studies at university. The third-level Technical Colleges are, it must be said, developing such courses.

In the area of basic and in-service training, where the most obvious need is to improve and maintain fluency in the language taught, the language associations are not hopeful of any dramatic changes on a national level to promote mobility and interchange until some progress has been made at E.E.C. level. This is why we so ardently received the 1975 and 1976 Resolutions of the Council of Ministers. We would strongly urge our government to adopt those proposals which are for implementation by member states, so that they may reasonably and credibly press for implementation of those devolving on the Commission - from which Ireland stands to benefit more than most.

A national information and advisory bureau exists in Germany, France and England, and their participation rates in exchanges are much more highly developed than those in countries like Ireland, where the programme of visits and exchanges is administered by the civil service or the embassies. We would therefore continue to press the Department of Education for the establishment of a national bureau for educational visits and exchanges, on a modest scale initially, but with provision for expansion as the programme grows. One area deserving instant attention is the removal of current departmental difficulties in the way of effecting visits of pupils to the countries whose languages we are teaching.

Most of the problems which I have mentioned arise from lack of communication with the Department, which in turn arises from a lack of modern languages inspectors. At the moment there is one inspector of French to deal with 190,000 students of French in 7,574 class groups taught by 1,351 teachers. There is no inspector of German to deal with 15,600 students of German in 820 class groups taught by 142 teachers of German. Nor is there any full-time inspector of Spanish to deal with 11,490 students of Spanish in 806 class groups and taught by 140 teachers of Spanish. Italian, with 1,061 students in 103 class groups and with 18 teachers, has no hope of an inspector! It is a tribute to the French inspector that despite his incredible work load French has a functioning Syllabus Committee, a functioning Pedagogic

Committee which plans the bulk of the spending of the in-service budget, and a relatively effective Franco-Irish exchange scheme for assistants and qualified teachers - all backed up by a Cultural Agreement. And still they gazed ... Mr Jim Connolly! It seems churlish to complain that the Leaving Certificate orals are being piloted for the third year without the slightest certification for the participants despite our repeated pleas and despite the fact that Computer Studies have been certified ab initio. Not to certify is indefensible; this may well be a case of spoiling the ship for a ha'p'orth of tar.

The other modern languages have had no pilot orals and only token recall of their Syllabus Committees, and they have no forum other than the press in which to voice their problems - like uneven standards between language examinations where equivalence is meant to exist. Once French moved out from the system of representation of all languages on one Modern Languages Syllabus Committee, the extreme vulnerability of all languages other than French became apparent. We calculate that a minimum of fourteen inspectors of French are required, two inspectors of German, and two inspectors of Spanish. We think that Italian could initially be serviced from the French, German and Spanish inspectorate (assuming ancillary competence in that language). While we appreciate the Minister's ingenuity in having two modern language inspectorships released from the embargo on appointments in the public service, we would urge a more realistic assessment of our needs. We would add our voice to that of the A.S.T.I. in urging that modern language inspectors be appointed as a matter of urgency.

Need we make the case for such appointments by repeating the current problems? -

- a pilot scheme in French operating without feedback for ten years;
- a pilot scheme in French operating at Leaving Certificate level for three years without certification;
- no co-ordination with other languages;
- no orals, no Syllabus Committees, no planning, no development, no letters even answered - because the Department has failed to appoint people who know the school system.

Perhaps the Curriculum and Examinations Board will relieve the bulk of these problems and release the inspectors to carry out the co-ordination, counselling and developmental

functions which are also notably absent. Or will it exacerbate current problems? What for instance will be the role of the subject specialists and what the role of the unions? Will we be faced with continued conflicts of professional loyalty - my subject or my union?

It was the best of times ... it was the worst of times.

II WHY LEARN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE?

The Convention's opening ceremonies were immediately followed by a symposium the aim of which was to present a wide variety of opinion on the role of modern languages in the second level curriculum and their usefulness in the community. Contributions to the symposium came from a number of speakers representing different interests and coming from various walks of life, who had been invited to present short papers on the subject: Why learn a foreign language? The panel of contributors included representatives from business, industry, agriculture, the universities, the colleges of technology, and the trade unions. We are happy to reproduce here summaries of the submissions made by many of these contributors. We should like to record our gratitude to all members of the panel for their efforts and co-operation in organizing the symposium.

A R Clarke
English Translation Division
Commission of the European
Communities
Brussels

In the course of the evening speakers have talked of the numerous reasons for learning foreign languages, ranging from the purely cultural (so as to be able to understand other countries and their peoples) to the frankly mercenary (in order to earn one's living in a world where the unskilled are inevitably at an economic disadvantage). It is, however, possible to combine these two equally laudable aims by working in another country as a translator or interpreter, either in a private company or in an international organization, which by their very nature generate a vast amount of material, both spoken and written, requiring translation into other languages.

The Commission of the European Communities in Brussels for instance, employs some 600 translators and a vast army of interpreters (the two jobs are administratively separate). There is a translation division for each official language

(at the moment Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek and Italian), the English translation staff numbering around 85. The word 'English' in the title applies to the language, not the nationality; staff must have English as their mother tongue but can be recruited from all Community Member States. Other criteria for admission to the open competitive examinations held every year or so, depending on requirements, are: a university degree (not necessarily in languages), some professional experience, and age below 32. If admitted to the examination, candidates are required to do test translations into English of general and specialized texts in French (usually compulsory) and another official language, but the actual options vary depending on the needs of the moment (currently the breakdown by language of the Division's workload is French 65 per cent, German 15 per cent, Dutch 5 per cent, Italian 5 per cent, Danish 5 per cent, miscellaneous 5 per cent).

If successful at the written examination, a candidate is called to an oral test and interview designed to ascertain his general level of education, knowledge of current affairs, psychological suitability for the job, etc. On average, roughly 5 per cent of applicants are placed on the reserve list and offered posts if and when they become available.

Working conditions are good and salaries well in excess of what language graduates can expect in their own countries. However, living abroad is not without its drawbacks and very careful thought should be given to such unquantifiable factors as problems which might arise in connection with homesickness, the inability to adapt to a different way of life, children's education, marital stresses, etc.

Helmut Clissman
German Irish Chamber of
Industry and Commerce

In preparation for this Convention the German Irish Chamber of Industry and Commerce conducted a survey among 250 Irish firms. The survey was conducted in the form of a questionnaire, and the questions together with the replies, which reveal many interesting aspects of the use of German in all sectors of Irish business, are set out below.

Number of questionnaires sent out - 250; replies - 50%; percentage of German and Irish companies replies - 50%.

Q.1 Is the German language used in your firm?

Yes: 79% No: 17%

The high percentage of 'Yes' replies is partly due to approximately half the questionnaires being sent to member firms of the German Irish Chamber, but nonetheless also indicates the extensive use of German in firms trading outside Ireland.

Q.2 Is this mainly

spoken German? 38% written German? 47%

telex correspondence? 51% translations? 31%

The importance attached to written German is a clear indicator that a very rudimentary knowledge of the language would not be sufficient in international business. It should also be noted how important the use of German is in telex correspondence, since it is often assumed that this can be carried out exclusively in English.

Q.3 Do you employ German-speaking personnel as

managers? 46% department heads? 12%

assistants/secretaries? 29% typists etc.? 9%

The high proportion of senior and mid-management with a knowledge of German in the firms questioned is surprising.

Q.4 Have your German-speaking staff acquired their knowledge of German through

school? 22% university? 12%

stay abroad? 35% evening classes? 25%

your company? 11% native? 19%

Although the highest percentage of German-speaking staff

had learnt their German abroad, the numbers attending evening classes and also learning German at school are relatively high. It is interesting to note that those firms quoting evening classes as the main source of knowledge were largely from the greater Dublin area.

Q.5 Do you find it easy or difficult to get German-speaking staff?

easy: 8% difficult: 50%

The relatively small number of schools teaching German throughout the country is clearly reflected in the replies to this question. Serious consideration should be given to offering greater opportunities to those wishing to learn German, partly because of the dominant position of Germany as a trading partner (it is second only to Britain) and as an investor in Irish industry (Germany comes immediately behind the United States).

Q.6 How would you normally recruit German-speaking personnel?

newspaper advertisement: 30% employment agency: 14%

word of mouth: 17% language schools/institutes: 6%

other organizations: 4%

The small percentage of firms recruiting German-speaking personnel from what were termed 'other organizations' has led to the German Irish Chamber of Industry and Commerce now playing a more active role in this service.

Q.7 Are there any other modern languages used regularly in your business?

French: 26% Italian: 7% Spanish: 7% others: 4%

The importance of French after German was known beforehand, but it would be interesting to see the results of a broader survey which might give a clearer indication of the relative importance of these two languages in Irish industry and commerce. The many 'others' included Swedish, Dutch and Russian; no mention was made of Arabic or Japanese.

Q.8 Would the availability of German-speaking staff help in your business?

a) definitely: 37% partly: 32% not really:18%

b) in selling to Germany: 29% in buying from Germany: 37%
in manufacturing: 21%

The relatively even spread in the use of German between manufacturing, importing and exporting firms is interesting. The fact that 37% of those questioned felt German-speaking staff were almost essential to their business is another clear inducement to be able to call on a wide range of personnel with a knowledge of German.

Q.9 The German Irish Chamber of Industry and Commerce receives enquiries from bilingual personnel. Would you be interested in receiving details of such enquiries to fill vacancies you have for such staff?

35 firms replied 'Yes'.

This synopsis is of necessity very short and any queries should be addressed to the author or Mr George Schurig at the German Irish Chamber of Industry and Commerce. I would like here to emphasize that the survey which we carried out was not to prove a point or underline a foregone conclusion but simply to seek information which would help us and particularly those responsible for the teaching of modern languages to formulate policy for the future. It is imperative that this small sample be extended to a broader and more independent survey and I think that some of the replies to our survey will encourage others to seek some detailed information.

R L Davis
School of Applied Languages
National Institute for Higher
Education
Dublin

In the past I have come across the occasional modern language undergraduate who has been incapable of sustaining even the most elementary conversation in his chosen foreign language. These unhappy occurrences prompt me to wonder why such people had decided to try to learn another language.

It has always been my understanding that a language was a method of communication, and that the practitioner had to possess three qualities: 1) a desire to communicate; 2) the means to express himself clearly and accurately; and 3) something worth communicating. Let us consider these three criteria in the context of Irish third level education.

The desire, or rather the necessity to communicate. Modern society thrives on communication: the press and the media, advertising, business deals, political speeches, union/management negotiations ...; the list is endless. The study of a foreign language gives an international dimension to the individual's communicative skills, and - in Irish terms - this is crucial to the nation's survival and future prosperity. We must trade to live, and it is almost a truism these days to point to the correlation between a company's export success and the linguistic ability of its marketing personnel (BOTB and BETRO reports). While it may be true that many large European firms can do business in English, experience suggests that for a variety of reasons most prefer to negotiate in their native tongue. Furthermore, an insistence on using English immediately closes the door on the host of smaller companies which do not employ English-speaking staff.

Clear and accurate language. Foreign language learning implies not simply manipulating a different set of sounds and symbols, but understanding them, and being able to step back and analyse content, meaning and context. The mastery of a language involves both technique and intellectual vision. For this reason, I do not believe that one can 'learn' German in four weeks!

To develop my example of the business world, the firm that had on its payroll a competent linguist would consider his £10,000 p.a. salary a sound investment when, thanks to clear, unambiguous communication, they clinched a deal worth hundreds of thousands with a foreign company.

The importance of the message. The study of a language provides the ability to communicate, but not necessarily anything of substance worth communicating. Hence I would stress the necessity for the linguist to have a skill or professional expertise above and beyond his language ability: a knowledge of business, law, computers or engineering - which will constitute his 'cutting edge' in the struggle for jobs. Why train a linguist for the dole queue?.

The teaching and examining of modern languages must not be allowed to retreat into academic narcissism. This can be avoided if we remember that language is essentially a means of communication, and that properly trained linguists can be a manpower resource of great value.

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Sean M Devitt
Department of Teacher Education
Trinity College
Dublin

The justification for including modern languages in the curriculum is, in the minds of many, a vocational one: modern languages are essential for today's industrialists, agriculturalists and businessmen, for anyone dealing in international affairs. But this is but a small percentage of the population of language learners. There are far more basic reasons for learning a foreign or second language, provided it is to be taught in a learner-centred manner. Learning a foreign or second language can contribute to the cognitive, social and personal development of the learner.

Cognitive. There are two levels of language: the content or message expressed and the means whereby it is

expressed. In learning how to manipulate the means - the rules of language usage - the learner has to make hypotheses and generalizations and test these against the data. The fact that content can be expressed in so many different ways helps to heighten his awareness of language use.

Social development may occur in two spheres: (i) being made aware of different cultures, different ways of looking at the world, different sets of values; (ii) interacting with other learners, which should heighten awareness of differences in interests and rates of learning.

On the level of personal development, new approaches to language teaching promote the autonomy of the learner. He is accepted as he is; his interests and language needs are analysed and form the basis of the course content. He can actively participate in organizing his own learning and in his own assessment. This increased responsibility enables him more readily to learn how to learn a language, something which has probably as much surrender value as actual language competence. The learner can be far more central in a language class than in any other, since it is the only class in which the totality of his experience and interests can actually be used as subject matter.

While the language class must not be considered the panacea for the educational ills that beset us, yet it cannot be doubted that modern languages stand not at the edge, but at the very core of the curriculum.

Vivienne Flanagan
Industrial Development
Authority

As the Training Manager of the Industrial Development Authority I am pleased to have this opportunity to share with you - who are involved in imparting language skills - some of the difficulties which I experience in relation to foreign languages.

My organization, as most of you know, is concerned with promoting Ireland as an industrial location. Apart from helping Irish industry, we offer incentives to foreign companies to invest in Ireland. The IDA thus has a marketing

function which attempts to persuade industrialists from overseas to invest in Ireland. We have many competitors in this and therefore need to be highly effective. There is a principle in marketing that when selling you must sell in the language of the person you are trying to persuade. Thus an executive who is, for example, going to Germany to persuade an industrialist to invest in Ireland, will have far less chance if he cannot communicate in German.

Unfortunately many students do not learn in school the languages most required for business purposes. For example, there are strong business links between Germany and Ireland, yet German is not taught in many schools. Even where students have studied a suitable language, problems still exist. While they have reading and writing ability, often they lack the verbal ability and this is what they most need. Vocabulary is another problem. Even where students have studied languages through to third level, they rarely have acquired a business vocabulary. While I understand that vocabulary is something which can be worked on after structures have been learned, as a representative of the business community I would appeal for some work to be done on business vocabulary.

Thank you for the opportunity of speaking to you. I hope that I have given you some appreciation of the importance of foreign languages in the business environment and the problems that exist.

J N Kenna
Confederation of Irish Industry

It is clear that other countries, particularly in Europe, have a much greater proficiency in foreign languages than we have. It is also clear that too few Irish businessmen and business trainees are fluent in any language other than English. There are many reasons to support a greater effort by everyone to learn a foreign language, and I should like to explain some of them:

1. We are part of the European Community of a total of 250 million people. Language is the primary means of communication. We cannot really integrate unless we have a second language.

2. Since about half our total trade is with countries who speak a language other than English as the mother tongue, it is imperative that we can communicate in the customer's language. It is no longer good enough to expect the other fellow, who is most likely to be the customer, to speak English.

3. It is a fact that companies selling into Europe in particular, who have executives who speak a foreign language (French or German) sell more in the countries in whose language the executives have a proficiency.

4. Irish men and women involved in European institutions or businesses find that while the techniques of simultaneous translation avoid the need to understand the language, this is not available in personal face-to-face discussion. It is very often essential for the purposes of establishing contact, or indeed doing business, to be able to speak to business associates outside the conference room. It is noticeable that where individuals cannot speak another language they tend to discuss and meet with people who speak the same language. This is limiting.

5. It is also recognized, despite our heavy dependence on trade and business links with countries such as Germany and France, that relatively few students at Leaving Certificate level take German. I understand the figures are something like 6% of students taking German, while about 80% take French; yet Germany is our second biggest trading partner.

6. As Ireland develops trade links with countries outside Europe apart from traditional markets such as the United States, a foreign language becomes even more essential. A case in point is Japan. The growing economic links between Ireland and Japan through trade and investment open up new possibilities for language training. Because of the differences between Irish and Japanese culture and business methods the acquisition of the Japanese language is an essential prerequisite to developing deep and lasting relationships with the Japanese. As an illustration of this, the EEC Commission has in the last three years sponsored eighteen-month study tours to Japan for young European executives. This year two young Irish executives will spend eighteen months in Japan, of which the first twelve months will be language training. It is interesting to note that Ireland has obtained 10% of the places in this scheme.

In short, we are not good at learning languages. We must improve. Better skills at languages would help us to develop trade, to strengthen our social, cultural and business links with a much wider grouping of peoples. It is also essential that we broaden our experience and contact outside what has traditionally been a narrow-based experience.

I believe that language training must become an essential part of an education system from kindergarten to third level and beyond.

Adele McAvock
French Language Training Unit
Civil Service Training Centre
Department of the Public Service

The French Language Training Unit, Civil Service Training Centre, Department of the Public Service was set up in the early sixties to prepare Irish civil servants for Ireland's membership of the E.E.C.

Ireland's presidency on two occasions and years of experience have helped to pinpoint the particular language skills required to enable Irish civil servants (a) to work efficiently in the different committees and sections of the E.E.C. and (b) to participate socially and informally in the peripheral activities of the committee rooms.

Skills required

1. Aural comprehension
2. Oral expression
3. Reading
4. Writing

Aural comprehension

a) The ability to understand official jargon at meetings without having recourse to interpretation (when it exists).

b) The ability to understand unspecialized French.

Oral expression

a) The ability to make clear concise points in a highly charged atmosphere.

b) The ability to lobby and make informal contacts.

Reading

a) The ability to assimilate work documents (even when presented without prior warning) for immediate discussion.

b) The ability to read unspecialized French.

Writing

a) The ability to write administrative and unspecialized letters.

b) The ability to write minutes of meetings.

c) The ability to write reports.

d) The ability to take notes.

Courses are held at the following levels:

1. Beginners
2. Intermediate
3. Advanced
4. Revision
5. Documentation comprehension
6. Weekend residential intensive advanced
7. Special programmes

Equipment used

Projectors, tape recorders, language laboratory, closed-circuit television.

Material used

Some audio-visual course material, adapted and expanded; material which has been specially designed for in-depth study (of language registers, nominalization, speech making, etc.); tape bank of E.E.C. press conferences, speeches, etc.

Why French?

It was felt that French was the nearest to being a common E.E.C. language.

Dermot Montgomery
Careers and Appointments Office
Trinity College
Dublin

1. There is a need to realize the wide variety of jobs in which foreign languages are a considerable asset.

Examples (leaving out obvious jobs like teaching, interpreting, translating).

(a) Export marketing/selling
(b) Purchasing
(c) Banking and merchant banking
(d) Insurance and insurance broking
(e) Accountancy
(f) Public notaries
(g) Trade mark agents
(h) Shipbroking
(i) Transport/freight
(j) Airlines
(k) Tourism, tour operating, promotion work
(l) Hotels and catering
(m) Advertising/market research

(n) Diplomatic service and other public service jobs

(o) Librarianship/information work

(p) Secretarial work

(q) Journalism/broadcasting

(r) International organizations, including voluntary ones

2. In most of these the young person needs to get experience and/or professional qualifications before beginning to use languages to broaden his career possibilities abroad.

3. It is necessary to educate our linguists as well as training them. In many of the above jobs a knowledge and understanding of, and indeed love for, a foreign country or countries is very necessary - not just a superficial facility in the rudiments of the language, although in some jobs this is enough.

4. It is very important that graduates in languages should have the confidence to try jobs outside the traditional ones. There has been perhaps in recent years a crisis of confidence in this area - not helped by the defeatist reactions of teachers and lecturers to the labour market.

J O'Shea
Irish Italian Business
Association

Trade between Ireland and Italy amounts to £190m in imports and £130m in exports, and it is increasing. Recently, after near balance in 1980, the balance has been in favour of Italy, which I understand is considered a difficult market.

Whether one is selling or buying, most business is built up through personal relationships, which can only be established through communicating person to person. Knowing the foreign language helps us to understand the cultural make-up of other peoples; it is usually much appreciated by them and disposes them favourably in their dealings with us.

My experience is by no means extensive, but I have been

involved in helping clients to buy raw materials in Italy, in selling some products to Italy, and in helping to set up companies here. In all cases neither side knew the other's language and there was no question of English sufficing; Italian was required. The cost of my participation was more than met by the better deals that ensued. I have a good speaking knowledge, reasonable reading knowledge, and little or no writing ability in Italian.

We are still buying extensively from the U.K. (50%) and U.S. (14%) despite the stength of their currencies which seriously affects our inflation rate. This is due in large measure to the common language which eases communication and inhibits exploration in the E.E.C. of other sources of materials where the language barrier arises. It is surprising that the positions of export and import managers advertised in the daily press rarely require knowledge of a foreign language and often merely state that such ability is an added advantage. Will exporting and importing take place effectively where such ability is absent? Hardly. For effective business the person initiating and conducting the transaction requires speaking ability (which in turn must have the back-up at home of people with high literary and grammatical ability), as well as some knowledge of the social, political and business structures and customs of the country concerned.

Hugh Ridley
Department of German
University College
Dublin

A university teacher's reply to the question 'Why study German?' will be largely predictable. He knows the subject to be worthwhile in itself. He knows that it acts as a bridge between cultures and nations, and is proud to be involved in the dissemination of sympathy and understanding both from the standpoint of the students he trains and from that of the school children some of these students will in their turn train.

The confidence of the university sector in modern languages is not the defence of the hand that feeds us, but

a recognition of a series of absolutely inalienable aspects of the discipline. More central to the universities, in the context of this congress, is to consider how to teach the discipline in a way which exemplifies our confidence in it, and how this teaching will relate to what is done at secondary level.

It is evident that all universities are involved in a process of reflection, certainly not confined to this country but in Germany, England and (as anyone who looked over the crisis number of Monatshefte, vol.73, no.3, will have seen) in the United States. I cannot possibly summarize these debates as they relate to German, but I would like briefly to comment on two aspects which seem to me paramount.

1. The place of language teaching in the university programme

It is no longer true to say that universities do not think positively about the teaching of language. Not only does language work feature more centrally in degree work and in the awarding of marks, but language is explored through a much wider range of normal usage than was the case twenty years ago. Oral and aural skills are more deliberately cultivated, and prose composition no longer rules over an undivided kingdom. Despite the handicap Irish students have of not spending a long period in the foreign country as an obligatory and supported part of their study, teaching methods have diversified to cover a wider range of discourse than once was felt appropriate. At the same time, however, as the presence of many excellent linguisticians in modern languages departments shows, universities remain interested in language as an area for intellectual exploration and in encouraging students to reflect on as well as to acquire language skill. In holding to this emphasis, universities do not dismiss the instrumentality of what they teach: they do, however, believe in the importance of intellectual and conceptual depth in their curriculum, they believe in the greater flexibility of the linguists trained in this fashion, and they recognize the need for a very high level of specificity in 'applied' language instruction, and the handicap which this represents in institutions committed to medium-term patterns of teaching, research and staffing.

2. The place of literature in the university curriculum

The starting-point for university modern languages programmes will, I believe, always be an irreducible minimum for foreign language literature, even when this is not

identified as a course aim. Whatever else is planned for the curriculum, it will have to start there. Three factors are crucial here: the syllabus of the Leaving Certificate, the linguistic need for reading practice in extenso, and thirdly the emancipatory nature of literature teaching, in contrast, for instance, to subject matter which needs a much greater teacher input and where the scope available to the individual student is so small.

Diversification will therefore be from a base in literature. In U.C.D. - which has to be the base for my own remarks - it is likely to be fostered by the further consolidation of the existing joint degree structure. It is already possible to take many combinations of language and career-orientated 'skill', e.g. Economics and German. I see the strengthening of these two discipline programmes through bridge courses and through the development of teaching enphases specific to subject combinations.

Diversification patterns are most likely, however, to relate to patterns of demand, both in terms of the school curriculum and in terms of the general employment patterns. The present uncertainty of some arts graduates about the worthwhileness of the study of foreign literature is an obvious product of a school curriculum which gives no place to such study. Recent studies have suggested the flexibility of the arts graduate in the employment market, and also the need for language graduates to have a second skill with which to sell themselves to employers. I see, once again, more sense for universities to keep a range of subject combinations open to their students (and of course the obligation on the second level curriculum to equip students to avail themselves of such options). The universities' openness to such moves seems to me to ensure, on the one hand a far greater flexibility in responding to the shifts of the employment market than merely establishing monolithic 'applied language' programmes which will always risk being in the wrong special area, or, in order to be catch-alls, will catch nothing; and on the other hand a guarantee of the intellectual and educational qualities of the traditional arts programme, while recognizing that the areas to which arts-based language programmes will naturally relate are the highly articulate professional skills in commerce, management, law, journalism, banking and so on for which universities will continue to be the principal training ground.

Kathleen M Tierney
Dublin Institute of Technology

To gain access to an understanding of another culture, another civilization, to achieve real communication with the people of that culture and civilization are unquestionably reasons for learning another language in today's world of fast transport. The forms, idioms and constructs of a language give an insight into the way people think in their own environment. It is equally valid to say that the real acquisition of another language effects a greater awareness not only of that language and of one's own language but of the nature of language itself; improved communication with others must ensue.

At a very practical level, to learn another language is to acquire another skill to enhance career prospects and to facilitate the interchange of ideas with colleagues.

William Wright
School of Engineering
Trinity College
Dublin

The following remarks are concentrated on two main areas:

(1) the relevance of foreign language skills to members of the professions of engineering and technical management;

(2) the extent to which a knowledge of foreign languages might be said to enhance career prospects in these professions.

1.1 Either because of the economies to be expected from mass production or because of increasing technical complexities, many modern industrial projects necessitate skills in two or more languages at managerial level.

1.2 In international gatherings, much of the crucial business is often conducted outside the official setting of the council chamber.

1.3 A knowledge of the language and background of one's foreign counterpart is often helpful in understanding the mentality, pressures and values to be taken into account in reaching satisfactory agreements.

2.1 In the higher echelons of industry and technology, communicative skills are becoming increasingly more important and, in consequence, the larger the number of channels through which such skills can be exercised the better.

2.2 Even early on in a professional career, knowledge of a foreign language can be of advantage in widening the number of openings available to the newly-graduated engineer.

2.3 A special course in French exists at Trinity College, Dublin, within the School of Engineering. This has proved popular with an important minority of students and has helped to sensitize them to the French dimension in their sphere of specialization. Talks are currently taking place with a view to establishing an analogous course in German.

2.4 Such foreign language skills widen the range of possible specialist training for Irish engineers immediately after graduation. Openings exist in France, Germany and elsewhere, enabling Irish graduates to consolidate their careers in Ireland after having spent the initial years of practical training abroad.

2.5 Such foreign languages should not be limited to continental European languages but should, for a minority of specialists, incorporate such languages as Japanese (especially in the field of telecommunications) and modern Arabic.

III THE PLACE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE CURRICULUM

Peter S Green
Language Teaching Centre
University of York

The very title of this talk assumes that foreign languages have a place in the curriculum. We who are in the language-teaching business naturally believe that, and elsewhere in this convention we have heard a variety of reasons to support that belief. I shall not dwell on them further except to say that I find it inconceivable that we could have the arrogance and insularity not to believe that we need to learn how other nations speak and write, even if they all understand our language. I am glad to say that in all the debate we have had recently about the school curriculum in Britain, a foreign language for all has formed part of the core curriculum.

Lack of success

Whether foreign languages have had their place on the fringe of the curriculum for a selected minority of pupils or at its core for the majority, few of us would wish to maintain, I imagine, that they have been very successfully taught. In Britain, those pupils who pass the school-leaving examinations in a foreign language at 16+ (GCE O-level and CSE) can often make little practical use of their language, and as a teacher-trainer I know that even the possession of a degree cannot be taken as a guarantee of any minimum fluency in a foreign language.

The true situation is even worse than that might suggest, for those with a degree or even a 16+ pass in a foreign language are but a tiny remnant of those pupils who set out along the language-learning road at the age of 11+. A report by the British schools inspectorate on foreign-language teaching in a sample of 83 comprehensive schools (HMI 1977) showed 89 per cent of pupils taking a foreign language at 11+ falling dramatically to 35 per cent at 14+. At 16+, O-level entries in French declined by 7 per cent over a ten-year period from 1965 to 1975. At 18+, passes in French at A-level declined by 6 per cent over the same period. There was a fall of 38 per cent in the numbers of graduates applying for teacher-training courses in the ten-year period from 1969 to 1979. The decline in the numbers of pupils learning foreign languages in succeeding age-groups is even more rapid if boys are considered alone: 20 per cent at O-level, 28 per cent at A-level and a massive 52 per cent for the teacher-trainees over the same period.

Though I have no personal experience of language teaching and learning in Ireland, what I have heard and read does not lead me to believe that the situation is much brighter here (see, for instance, Smyth 1981).

Our lack of success has not been for any dearth of innovation in method, for lack of new teaching materials or for want of technical equipment. On the contrary, the last twenty years have seen the introduction of audio-lingual and audio-visual methods, the early teaching of foreign languages (French from eight), courses like Crédif in France, A-LM in the USA and the Nuffield/Schools Council materials in the UK, tape-recorders, language laboratories, and filmstrip and overhead projectors. They also brought us a whole series of comparative method studies that consistently failed to demonstrate any significant advantage of the new methods, new equipment or early start. In the USA, the Keating Report (Keating 1963) concluded that pupils were disadvantaged by using the language laboratory, the most intelligent most of all, and the massive Pennsylvania Project (Smith 1970) found that pupils following a traditional method were equal or superior in performance to those following an audio-lingual method. In Sweden, the series of GUME projects (Levin 1972) were unable to establish any significant difference between implicit and explicit approaches to grammar teaching in schools. In Britain, the final report on the evaluation of the primary school French project (Burstall 1974) concluded that "the weight of the evidence" had "combined with the balance of opinion to tip the scales against a possible expansion of the teaching of French in primary schools"; and according to the York Study (Green 1975) "a substantial number of schools may well be achieving no more with a costly language laboratory than they could achieve with a simple tape-recorder used in the classroom".

Reasons for failure

Why were our expectations not fulfilled? Why did the great investment of ideas, enthusiasm and money not bring the hoped-for returns?

Consider a typical learning sequence from a course widely used in British schools, the Nuffield German course Vorwärts. First the pupils hear a new text (usually a dialogue) recorded on tape and look at a filmstrip. Then the tape is replayed and the text explained with the help of the filmstrip pictures. A further playing of the tape follows in which the pupils repeat the text. Then the text is practised in sections, and finally the pupils reconstitute it, aided only by the pictures. These, at any rate, are the five stages of

PRESENTATION, EXPLANATION, REPETITION, BUILD-UP and REPRODUCTION recommended by the teacher's manual. In a bottom set which I taught in a York comprehensive school (composed, incidentally, entirely of boys), the pupils were always very well motivated during the first two of these five stages, the presentation and explanation. They put maximum effort into the attempt to understand the dialogue and showed not only great willingness but also great intelligence in making meaningful guesses at the words and phrases they did not know. This part of the lesson was genuine communication: the text had something to say to the pupils and they wanted to know what it was. The move to the next stage, that of repetition, brought an immediate and sharp fall in the level of motivation and attention, because although the pupils were now being asked to speak no communication was taking place and we both knew it. The text was no longer saying anything to them - there was nothing left for it to say - and they in speaking it were not saying anything to me that I did not already know. Our only interest - or perhaps I should say my interest - was in the form of the language: were they pronouncing it right, getting the words in the right order, and so on? Rather than having to play the same dialogue to them again and again, I should have liked to have up my sleeve several more texts in which the same constructions combined with some new vocabulary were used to convey something new. In that way repetition could have been achieved without loss of meaning and, consequently, pupil motivation. Unfortunately, most language courses are just not like that: each unit usually has a small core of new text surrounded by a mass of exercises, which are generally low on meaning and high on manipulation. Instead, it seems to me, we need courses where the proportions are reversed, where there is a lot of interesting material to understand, both spoken and written, and much less in the way of purely manipulative exercises.

The Vorwärts method, apparently so different from its predecessor, the grammar-translation method, that J. B. Carroll saw them as two diametrically opposed approaches, which he called the COGNITIVE-CODE-LEARNING theory and the AUDIO-LINGUAL-HABIT theory (Carroll 1966), was in fact not so different. Both methods directed the pupils' attention towards the form of the language and, consequently, away from its content. But that, you might say, is surely what language teaching is about - teaching the language, not teaching something else? Paradoxically, however, it is beginning to look as if language is best retained when attention is paid to the message rather than the medium.

Language learning and language acquisition

Of course, to speak and understand a language we have to know its grammar. But, as we all know on reflection and take for granted about our own language, though we are not so often explicit about it when talking of language-teaching method, there are two sorts of knowledge about the grammar of a language. The first is intuitive and enables us to form correct sentences without thinking of anything other than what it is we want to say. The second is conscious and requires us to think not only of what we want to say but also of how to say it. The first is indispensable for real language use: the second is necessary only for talking about how a language works. Speakers of a language always have the first kind of knowledge; if they have the second, they are either linguists or language teachers or learners. The unconscious knowledge has been acquired in real language use; the conscious knowledge has probably been learned through study in or out of a classroom. Most language teaching is based on the assumption that the classroom is the wrong environment and teaching time too short to permit the acquisition of unconscious knowledge and that, therefore, knowledge of the foreign language must be consciously learned as a sort of short cut to language proficiency. The teaching (whether of the cognitive-code-learning or of the audio-lingual-habit variety) is therefore organised to direct attention to the forms of the language: the syllabus is grammatical. It is an act of faith of such teaching that if the forms are sufficiently well practised and understood, they will gradually become automatic, i.e. conscious knowledge will be converted into unconscious knowledge. That assumption is now being seriously challenged.

A great deal of research in recent years has been devoted to a comparison of first and second language acquisition, and the finding that seems to emerge is that the obvious differences of situation, motivation, etc. have tended to disguise the similarities between the two processes. It appears that second-language learners do acquire an unconscious grammar and, moreover, they acquire it in a relatively fixed order, just as first-language learners seem to do. This seems to hold true not only for natural learning situations, such as total immersion in a foreign culture, but also for classroom learning. Classroom learners are usually also being taught the grammar in some organised way, so what is the relationship between the unconsciously acquired grammar and the consciously learned grammar? It seems to be that they remain separate systems, that as far as one can measure the unconscious system it develops at its own pace, independently of the order of the grammar that has been formally taught. Spontaneous language production is

entirely dependent on whatever grammar has been acquired unconsciously, and formally learned grammar can only come into play to check and, if necessary, correct what has been spontaneously produced. These ideas are best summarised in the work of Stephen Krashen (Krashen 1981), who distinguishes LANGUAGE ACQUISITION from LANGUAGE LEARNING and terms the relationship between them the MONITOR.

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION takes place unconsciously when the student's attention is focused on the message of the foreign language, on its content. For this to happen, the student must have access to "comprehensible input" - language that is readily understood - and have a low "affective filter", i.e. not put up barriers to the input (for instance, because of anxiety about making mistakes). Acquired language follows a pre-ordained sequence and the pace cannot be forced.

LANGUAGE LEARNING takes place consciously through rules, drills and exercises in which the student's attention is directed towards the medium, the form of the language. The sequence of learning is not fixed but determined by the syllabus.

The MONITOR operates when learned rules are consciously applied to check the accuracy of spontaneously produced language, in which acquired rules operate unconsciously. That is the only relationship between acquired and learned language, which otherwise remain separate, independent systems. Three conditions have to be met for monitoring to take place: 1) the student's attention is directed towards the form of the language, 2) the student knows an appropriate rule, and 3) the student has time to apply the rule.

Krashen's ideas accord well with common observations of learner behaviour. For example, one of the simplest rules for learners of English is that the verb usually has an s-ending in the third person singular of the present tense. But even very bright pupils will continue to omit it in spontaneous speech long after they have understood and learned the rule. It may take as little as a cough or raised eyebrow from the teacher for the pupil to spot and correct the error instantly. The form has not been acquired, but it has been learned and, as soon as attention is drawn to the language itself, monitoring can occur.

If we try to force the pace and get pupils to speak before they have acquired the grammar necessary for doing so, then they have recourse to the only grammar they have acquired, that of the native language. The result is either completely anglicised speech or, if they are bright and have learned a lot of rules, they may be able to produce correct speech very haltingly. For the vast majority, however,

learning without acquisition will be stultifying and in the end produce nothing of practical value. So, our classroom teaching needs to be organised to enable language acquisition to take place. What, then, are the conditions favouring acquisition?

Language acquisition depends on "comprehensible input" - language for listening and reading that the pupils want to understand, because its content is interesting, amusing or important, and that they can understand because it is not too difficult. But in many classrooms the amount of input pupils get is very low, because we are anxious to have them speak, and its content is often trivial, because we are more concerned with its form.

No doubt this demand for instant production of the foreign language by our pupils arises from the high status accorded to speaking a foreign language: it is probably universally the most highly prized of language activities. We ask "Do you speak French?" to mean "Do you know French?". Perhaps this leads us to force the pace, to want our pupils to speak right from the start, and to speak in whole sentences that are grammatically correct. This urge overlooks the fact that repeating or regurgitating someone else's words is not really speaking, and that our over-strenuous efforts to get our pupils to speak often mean that we get bogged down in the language of the teaching texts and only occasionally get as far as genuine pupil-produced language.

I also think that we have been misled by the comparatively recent invention of the so-called four language skills and their alleged natural order of acquisition (see, for instance, Alexander 1967, p. viii). I say "invention" because I know of no evidence for the existence of four separate skills involved in listening, speaking, reading and writing. On the contrary, the evidence from large numbers of language tests is that these different activities draw very largely on a common underlying linguistic skill* - not surprising perhaps when one considers that largely the same grammar and vocabulary are involved in all of them. It is also misleading to call listening and reading passive skills: both are active processes. Our ability to understand a sentence efficiently, particularly under poor conditions of reception such as

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*The structure of foreign-language ability is currently the subject of lively debate, e.g. in a number of papers at the recent 6th International Congress of Applied Linguistics in Lund, Sweden - "AILA 81". However, even those who reject the "unitary competence hypothesis" in favour of a multidimensional model would not claim any direct correlation between the different components they have found and the four skills.

background noise or illegible handwriting, is dependent on our ability to produce the same sentence or a similar one. What Oller has called a "grammar of expectancy" (Oller 1973, p.511) causes the incoming fragments of speech to set up expectations in us about what words or kinds of words will come next. We are thus able to supply words that are missing, obscured or distorted, so that understanding is not impeded. Whether we are listening or reading we are actively predicting what will come next, so actively sometimes that we impatiently finish off a sentence for a slow speaker. The cloze procedure of deliberately distorting a text and then asking a native or non-native speaker to attempt to restore it, taps the grammar of expectancy and is therefore such an effective test of foreign-language performance.

Implications for the classroom

All these factors suggest to me that we should reduce our emphasis on our pupils' speaking and writing, and use the time gained to offer them a much richer diet of language to listen to and read than the "thin gruel" we put before them at present. In doing so, the important aim we have to keep before us is that of communication. What we say to pupils or ask them to read should have a real content, and not exist solely to exemplify a particular construction. It should not be what Widdowson calls "language put on display" (Widdowson 1978, p.53).

But, of course, our pupils want to speak and write as well as listen and read, and whilst I am advocating that we should not push them into doing so prematurely, I am certainly not suggesting that we should discourage them from doing so when they want to. However, we do often demand production whilst unwittingly discouraging it at the same time, and we do that by our reaction to what pupils produce. The audio-lingual-habit theory held that pupil errors were to be avoided at all costs because it was believed pupils would learn their errors, and long before that pupils were exhorted, "If you don't know it, don't say it". Many language teachers find it hard to hear a pupil out once an error has been made, and it is a common finding that native speakers of a language are more tolerant of learners' errors than non-native teachers of the language (see, for instance, Green 1975, p.80). Native speakers tend to listen to the message and unconsciously compensate for any redundant errors, noticing only those which impair communication. Grammar cannot be acquired ready-made and errors are an inevitable part of the process for natives and non-natives alike. When an error is corrected, attention is turned from the meaning of the language to its form. Thus,

the correction can only benefit the learning process, but it will not help the learner to avoid making the same error again in spontaneous production because it will not have helped the acquisition process. How inexorably acquisition is linked with meaning is illustrated by the following native-language exchange between a child and an adult:

Child: I nearly fall.
Adult: You mean "I nearly fell".
Child: No, I didn't mean that at all.
Adult: What did you mean then?
Child: I nearly fall.

The child knew the meaning of "fall" and did not see any connection with "fell", which it had not yet acquired. (The adult, incidentally, was a language teacher!)

Serious errors are those that stop the message from getting through, and vocabulary errors therefore tend to be more important than endings. But in one respect non-native teachers are more tolerant of error than native speakers: they often know from experience and knowledge of English what a learner is trying to say where a native speaker might not. In that case, the teacher may fail to give the learner the appropriate feedback of incomprehension and simply correct the error. If we try to listen to what the learner is saying and not how it is being said, then it is easier to adopt a less inhibiting attitude towards error. There is a striking contrast between the delight of a parent at the inventiveness of a two-year-old who, pointing to the food on her plate, said "You cut it to me, shall we?" and the dismay of the teacher if the same sentence were heard in a foreign-language class - at least three errors in seven words!

But what about accuracy? After all, most public exams that our pupils face - in Britain at any rate - put a high premium on accuracy, and if we fail to give them some formal knowledge to enable them to "monitor" their production, then we shall not be doing right by them. That is certainly true, though I would like to enter a number of caveats. The first is that accuracy is often used in a rather restricted way to refer to correctness of morphological categories such as case and tense endings and does not include accuracy of vocabulary, syntax and idiom, which may be much more important for communication. Moreover, the model of morphological accuracy against which pupils are measured tends to be an idealised one, which native speakers of comparable age and ability may also fall surprisingly short of.*

*In a research project which I am currently conducting with

Secondly, we must always beware of making the exams the rationale for our teaching rather than the reverse. Exams are not mountains to be scaled, like Everest, "simply because they are there": they can be moved or, at any rate, changed (see below). Thirdly, class time devoted to learning and practising forms is inevitably time taken away from the acquisition of language through communication: the balance sheet of profit and loss has to be drawn up carefully. Finally, it seems to be only a minority of pupils who are both interested in the mechanics of language and able to understand them. Language teachers, who themselves belong to that minority, can easily forget that that does not seem to be true of pupils of average and below-average ability, who form the majority. Whilst the latter can certainly learn vocabulary, paradigms and rules, they are baffled and frustrated by the grammatical analysis that is necessary to construct sentences with them. Language learning of that kind seems to them like a cruel conspiracy to lead them into constant error.

Hopeful signs

What I have been advocating demands different course materials and different examinations from those currently available in Britain - and, I believe, in Ireland too. There are, however, hopeful signs that they may be on their way.

I said earlier that we need materials that offer a lot of interesting comprehension materials - both spoken and written - at a level that pupils can understand, and much less in the way of purely manipulative exercises. That probably calls for a different type of course writer from the present one, who is typically a non-native teacher of the language and probably better qualified for the production of exercises than for writing lively texts in interesting language. The ideal person for that is more likely to be a native speaker experienced in writing for young people. However, interesting material is now emerging in both Britain

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Professor KH. Hecht of Munich University, German and British schoolchildren of like age and ability range were given the same letter-writing task in English. The letters were then marked on the same terms by both German and British teachers. The British pupils by no means all scored higher than the German pupils, and a number of "impostors", i.e. British letters presented to the markers as coming from German pupils, were neither identified nor given high grades.

and Ireland - at an elementary level, for example, Action by my colleague Mike Buckby and Salut from the I.T.É. Modern Languages Project; at an advanced level, France : Presse by another of my colleagues, Mary Dalwood, and Authentik, which is not only a digest of authentic newspaper materials but is also presented in an authentic newspaper format.*

However good the materials that are commercially available to the teacher, a prime source of interesting material for the pupils to listen to will continue to be the teacher himself. He has the enormous advantage over the tape-recorder that he is there, doing it live for his pupils, unlike the voice on the tape, which is not only disembodied but usually anonymous as well and addressing anonymous listeners. The teacher can promote the understanding of what he is saying by gestures, movements, miming, pointing, facial expressions, lip movements and so on, and can adjust to the feedback from his audience, slowing down, simplifying, repeating, rephrasing etc.

What has the teacher got to talk about that is of interest to the pupils? First of all, there are all those real things that he has to say to them like "Get your books out", "Go to room 20 next period", "I'm going to be away tomorrow", "Turn round, Julie". Ironically, these are often the very things that get said in English because of the importance of their being understood, which only serves to create the belief in the pupil, perhaps unconsciously, that foreign languages are not for real communication. Secondly, I think that pupils are usually genuinely curious about the teacher himself. Where does he live? How old is he? Is he married? What sort of person is he outside the classroom? And so on. This is a curiosity that can be satisfied gradually through the medium of the foreign language. It can be exploited not only as regards the teacher as a person but also as regards specific happenings. If the teacher is late, why is he? If he was absent, why was he? If it is his daughter's birthday, how old is she and what presents did she get?

One of the most remarkable developments in language teaching in British schools in the last half dozen years has been the rise of what has come to be called "the graded test movement". The principal feature of this movement has been

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*Action is published by Nelson. Salut is available from I.T.É. (Linguistics Institute of Ireland), 31 Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin 2; France : Presse from Longman Group - Resources Unit, Tanner Row, York; and Authentik is available from The Secretary, Authentik, c/o 19 Dolphin Road, Dublin 12.

to define practical and realistic short-term goals for pupils at a series of levels and to develop materials to teach and test them. Each level or grade corresponds to about one year's work for the average pupil, but a feature of the tests is that pupils can take them when they have reached the appropriate level of achievement. The tests are criterion-referenced, i.e. pupils are measured not against other pupils but against a defined standard of performance, and normally a certificate is awarded for the achievement of a particular grade.

The graded test movement has been a grass-roots movement, with teachers coming together in working groups in different parts of the country in their spare time, without financial reward and without central direction. At the last count there were some sixty such groups, and in 1978 the Schools Council asked the Language Teaching Centre of the University of York to undertake an evaluation of the effects of graded tests on the attitudes of two groups of pupils, teachers and parents. Very briefly summarised, the attitudes of two groups of pupils were studied at the beginning and end of their third year of learning French in comprehensive schools in the York and Leeds areas. One group of about six hundred pupils followed a graded-test syllabus for the first time, and the other, also of six hundred pupils, continued to learn French in whatever way was customary in their school. The two groups were found to have comparable language-learning ability as measured by a language aptitude test. At the outset of the year, no significant difference was found between the attitudes of the two groups towards learning French. At the end of the year, however, there was a highly significant difference between the groups ($p < .005$) with the graded-test pupils showing much the more favourable attitudes. Also, considerably more of the graded-test pupils opted to continue with French in the following year (Buckby 1981).

Two factors appear to me to account for the success of graded tests in motivating pupils. Firstly, pupils of all abilities are offered an attainable goal, and secondly, what they learn in attaining it seems of practical relevance to them. It has been common to all the graded-test syllabuses, as far as I know, for them to be expressed in functional rather than grammatical terms. In this sense, there is a clear link with the work of the Council of Europe on a Threshold Level (van Ek 1976), but the two are to be seen as parallel, independent developments rather than as one having arisen out of the other.

Whilst I welcome both developments as positive approaches to defining the syllabus for foreign-language learning in terms of language use rather than grammatical categories,

I think we should be clear that it does not necessarily follow that the teaching of such a syllabus will focus on the content of the language rather than its form, as I have been advocating. The attempt to predict what meanings a learner will need to express comes up against the problem that the more predictable the language, the more it consists of set phrases and clichés, which carry social and transactional meaning but very little personal meaning. Personal meanings can be highly unpredictable, as is shown by Julian Dakin's famous quotation from an interview with an eight-year-old girl. "My guinea pig died with its legs crossed" (Dakin 1973, p.7). There is a danger of an emphasis on the form of language in the role-playing that is commonly used in practising functional syllabuses, if pupils are only required to reproduce someone else's words. Role-playing can be entertaining and meaningful, provided there is always room in it for choice, invention and fantasy.

The success of graded tests has put much needed pressure on the public examination system at 16+ in Britain for, despite welcome reforms in the sixties, which increased the oral content of the exams and weakened the hold of prose and unseen translation, linguistic competence, particularly in writing, has continued to be rewarded at the expense of communicative competence. A level-four graded test has already been accepted as a CSE exam and it is likely that level five will be accepted as an O-level and will include tests of comprehension of authentic spoken and written French as well as real-life production tasks such as filling in forms. This pressure has come at a very opportune moment, when in Britain discussions are taking place on the shape and aims of a common system of examining at 16+, which is to be appropriate to the top 60 per cent of the ability range, which is "to move towards some criterion-referencing of grades" and which is to define clearly both the aims and the content of the syllabus. That would mean that a certain grade in the exam would refer to a specific level of performance in a particular area and therefore, unlike the present grades, give an indication of what a candidate with that grade could actually do in the foreign language.* One system which has been proposed for the new examination would test the four areas of listening, reading, speaking and writing

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*At present about 40-45 per cent of the ability range at 16+ take one of the two public examinations in foreign languages - the more able of them GCE O-level (General Certificate of Education - Ordinary Level), the less able CSE (Certificate of Secondary Education). The grades they receive are global for performance in the whole exam and do not indicate the achievement of any specified level of performance, only how the candidates performed relative to each other, i.e. the exams are norm-referenced.

separately, each at two levels - basic and extended - and permit candidates to take different combinations of the eight components. The highest grade would be awarded for a pass in all eight components and the lowest for a pass in two of them. The certificate would record the profile which had been achieved. This system, unlike the present one, would allow candidates to be tested only in the receptive areas if they wished. If these proposals are adopted for the new examination, which is due to be introduced in about five years' time, the effect on language teaching in British schools could be very beneficial. Pupil motivation would be increased because positive achievement, even at quite limited levels, would be rewarded.

I have spoken of the similarity between native-language and foreign-language acquisition. That is obviously not the only similarity between them, and it is a sad fact that the common ground is not recognised in the school curriculum, where they are seen as totally different subjects, at least in Britain. Eric Hawkins in his recent book Modern Languages in the Curriculum (Hawkins 1981) - a fascinating compendium which deserves a place on every language teacher's bookshelf - has suggested that the native-language teacher and the foreign-language teacher should come together to plan and teach a coherent language course which would be a "trivium"* of three elements: the study of the native language, the study of a foreign language and, bridging the two, the study of "language". Hawkins suggests four areas or themes which might form the basis of this new school subject:

1) forms of language - sign language, codes, dialects, registers, language families, slang, spoken and written language, writing systems, etc.;

2) structure of language - sounds, syllables, words, meanings, grammar, etc.;

3) language in use - articulation, sound systems of different languages, "good" and "bad" language, language change, etc.;

4) language acquisition - child language, reading, L1 and L2 acquisition, etc.

Hawkins recognises that, for such a scheme to be success-

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*Hawkins explains that "trivium" was a term used by medieval curriculum planners for their course in grammar, logic and rhetoric (op.cit., p.xii).

fully implemented, teachers will need a knowledge of linguistics which most university English and foreign-language courses do not confer. Models of appropriate courses do exist, such as that in Language at York University, where the study of linguistics is combined with the study of English, French or German, but in the meantime he is following the word with the deed. With characteristic energy and imagination he is promoting seminars and courses on language in the school curriculum, and a series of teaching materials for the new subject produced both by him and under his editorship will shortly start to appear in the Cambridge University Press.

Language is a fundamental human characteristic. How we feel about other people is powerfully associated with how they speak, and if they speak differently from us, whether in a foreign language or a different accent of our own language, then we very easily feel them to be alien. Language is also a powerful weapon for those who wish to manipulate us and exploit us through propaganda and advertising. Our very thinking may be influenced by the interaction between words and concepts. To teach pupils languages and about languages is to serve a prime purpose of education in liberating pupils from prejudice and exploitation. The place of foreign languages in the curriculum is at its very centre.

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IV AN EXAMPLE OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT: THE I.T.É. MODERN LANGUAGES PROJECT IN THE CLASSROOM

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The I.T.É. Modern Languages Project is concerned with implementing a communicative approach to the teaching of French, German, Spanish and Italian. Syllabuses for these languages are being defined according to communicative criteria established in the Skeleton Syllabus (Principles and Guidelines). Classroom materials to implement the syllabuses are being written and tested through the voluntary efforts of teachers in a number of post-primary schools around the country.

This paper deals with the classroom implementation of the project through materials designed according to the communicative principles described below. Certain methodological implications emerge from the discussion and it is hoped that in time the project will be able to make a contribution to the development of a more communicative methodology.

The materials for French (Salut!) are the source of the illustrations below, but the materials for all four languages follow the same general principles. They are flexible, open-ended teaching units which are intended to be adapted to suit the individual as well as group needs and interests of twelve-to-fifteen-year-old Irish pupils beginning the study of a foreign language. They are an aid to the learning process in that they are designed to motivate and help pupils to discover the language they need to perform relevant communicative activities. The emphasis is primarily on the communication of meanings, and the development of grammatical competence is seen very much within the context of acquiring this general communicative competence. The specified tasks are designed to foster the growth of strategies and skills which help the learner to go beyond the recognition or recital of familiar elements to the interpretation and production of language which is new to him.

It is believed that language learning can be a rewarding and enjoyable experience for all pupils if realistic, worthwhile and attainable objectives are set. Trim has summarized the language learning experience of the past (and not necessarily the distant past) as follows:

> Foreign languages as a school subject have often left bitter memories of a struggle with irregular verbs,

> gender and case endings, an obsession with grammatical correctness and exactness of translation. A piece of language has been something to pore over and work away at rather than a means of easy spontaneous communication. For too many, traditional methods brought anxiety and humiliating failure. Languages, then, were something for the specially gifted or a privileged elite with special connections abroad. Large sections of our population were led to think foreign languages just too difficult for them. (Trim 1978)

Even the least ambitious language teacher expects a little more than a knowledge of grammar and vocabulary of his pupils. The little more he expects has to do with meaning. He wants his pupils to understand the meaning of at least some of what they hear or read in the target language and he wants what the pupils themselves say or write in that language to be meaningful. These sentiments have found an echo in this comment from a pupil following Salut!:

> I think that Salut! is a lot better than French books I did in previous years. It is more practical and tells you what you really need to know, not things like what you would do if a cat was up a tree. It tells you how to say hello, ask directions and know everything that would come in useful in France.
>
> (Tony McEvoy, Newpark Comprehensive School, Blackrock, Co. Dublin)

One hopes that the course goes beyond a mere tourist survival kit and allows for the purposeful and personal involvement of pupils in a range of meaningful communicative tasks. A willing suspension of disbelief is obviously necessary for simulated communication in the classroom. The project encourages a reasonable balance between such simulated activities and the actual practice of language forms (cf. Teaching with the I.T.É. Modern Languages Project Materials, chapter 6). It does not envisage that language forms or indeed meanings be 'fed' into Tony McEvoy so that they can be faithfully reproduced by him. The syllabus and materials rather invite Tony to engage in a process of negotiation with his teacher about learning experiences which will help him trace a path towards his own version of the target language which, however defective it may be at times, will at least be effective in enabling him to understand and be understood in communicative situations.

It is in this spirit that materials are designed according to the following principles of communicative (and by implication learner-centred) teaching:

1. Use the language in class.
2. Start from communicative objectives.
3. Contextualize language.
4. Offer the learner choice.
5. Establish differentiated objectives.
6. Set meaningful communicative tasks.
7. Encourage independent learning.
8. Adopt an integrated approach to the 'skills'.

1. Use the language in class

Both teacher and pupil are encouraged to use the foreign language where possible. This is particularly feasible for routine classroom management, e.g. organizing classroom activities or maintaining discipline. Teachers are supplied with a booklet entitled Classroom Socializing which includes useful expressions for teacher-pupil interaction and also for pupil-pupil interaction. The learners are encouraged to use the target language together not only in pairs, group work and games, but also in organizing these activities, e.g. 'It's your turn', 'I'll be ...', 'Let's ...', 'Hurry up', etc. They are supplied with the language necessary for this as well as that required for their normal interaction with the teacher, as in the following extract from Salut!, Unit 1:

ASKING THE FRENCH FOR SOMETHING

When you want to know what something is in French you can point to it and ask: *Comment ça s'appelle en français?*

The answer may be: *Ça s'appelle un* _____
une _____

or: *En français on appelle ça un* ____
une ____

This is a meaningful use of language by the pupil to obtain information in a manner in which he is personally involved and may be considered an instance of real communication. This is in contrast to the more traditional approach where the teacher initiates the dialogue by holding up or pointing to an object, e.g. a book, and asks 'Qu'est-ce que c'est?' to which he expects the answer 'C'est un livre'. The pupil knows only too well what it is but may not know the French for book. By giving him the linguistic tools to obtain the French equivalent for something he can add to his repertoire whenever he experiences the need to do so. In this way, learning a language becomes in itself a communicative activity.

2. Start from communicative objectives

Courses have traditionally been designed with the primary aim of teaching grammatical usage and the texts have often been contrived or doctored to facilitate the systematic presentation of the grammar. The project operates on the assumption that systematic descriptive grammar alone is not a suitable basis for communicative teaching, that grammatical forms should be taught for clearly defined communicative purposes and should derive from these purposes. These should be relevant to the learner, related to his interests and needs, both present and future. The focus here is on the learner rather than on the language per se. This calls into question the more traditional ordering of language content according to notions of formal simplicity/complexity and such accepted procedures as the teaching of complete paradigms. Pupils in the project learn, for example, to express themselves with reference to present, future and past events in their first year although much of the present tense has not as yet been learnt because the learners' interests require a departure from the classical paradigm of ordering. The starting point is the communicative task or tasks to be mastered, language as use rather than usage, as in the following objectives list from Salut!, Unit 1:

IN THIS UNIT YOU CAN LEARN TO

- say hello/goodbye
- ask someone his/her name and give your name
- spell in French
- introduce someone
- ask someone how he/she is and say how you are
- count in French
- say where you live
- say what age you are and say when your birthday is
- talk about your family and friends
- check who someone is when you're not sure
- ask how you say something in French
- ask who someone is

These learning tasks are identified as units of meaning rather than as formal points of grammar. This is in no way to lessen the importance of grammar but merely to emphasize that the materials start from a grammar of meaning rather than of form. The teaching units are concerned with helping the learner understand and express meanings and with giving him the grammatical forms and vocabulary necessary for this rather than first giving him forms and leaving him to look for possible uses for these himself.

The I.T.É. project materials attempt to develop the learner's communicative ability by starting from communicative objectives and relating his grammatical competence to the communicative task(s). A teaching unit focussing on, for example, free time activities would naturally aim to enable the learner to state that he likes/dislikes certain activities, to describe what he does in his free time and to elicit similar information from others. It would also teach him how to suggest to someone what they might do with their free time, how to agree to or turn down a suggestion, to give his reasons and how to propose an alternative suggestion if he is not too enthusiastic about someone else's proposal. The performance of such communicative tasks or language functions requires the control of formal elements which are then taught because they are necessary, e.g.

MAKING A SUGGESTION

On va		*à*		
Allons		*à la*		
Et si on allait	+	*à l'*	+	noun referring to place
Tu veux aller		*au*		
		aux		

('Grammar' includes *aller* - present, imperfect, first person 'imperative'
vouloir + infinitive
forms of *à* + definite article)

The learner is given the opportunity to practise those forms which he sees as necessary to perform the communicative tasks in question; his motivation is accordingly increased and his communicative ability is progressively developed alongside his grammatical competence. This is in contrast to a system where over the years he builds up a considerable amount of grammar (and vocabulary) which he can attempt to synthesize and use for the purposes of communication only towards the end of the process. In the communicative approach the learner is not obliged to wait until he has scaled the mountain to enjoy the view, as what he learns has immediate relevance. Pupils who drop the study of the foreign language after the Group or Intermediate (or indeed Leaving) Certificate examination have at least some 'surrender value' in an approach which is based on communicative activities.

3. Contextualize language

It is fully realized that the learning of discrete functions (e.g. making a suggestion) may be no more helpful

than learning forms in isolation and can be reduced to mere slot and filler utterances. The pupil must be shown how to string these utterances together in communicative chains. Model dialogues are supplied as a guide but dialogues are not included in great quantity to be learned and reproduced. Their purpose is to illustrate ways of combining discrete elements of language so that the learner can make his own personal combinations which would hopefully lead to language production rather than mere reproduction.

To facilitate this pupils are supplied with a reference chart (figure 1). The first column indicates the meanings or language functions to be performed, the other two supply the language exponents in French. The second column contains the initiating language and the third column the language required for responding. This is to facilitate pairs work, as pupil/pupil interaction activities are a vital part of the methodology. This reference chart, which is placed at the start of each learning unit, also helps to clarify the learning objectives for the pupils as well as offering a useful summary of the language contained in the unit.

The learner is supplied with speech options so that he can choose and learn to cope with various possible turns in the discourse. In the discourse chain illustrated in figure 2 the discrete elements can be chained in a variety of ways which allow the pupil to personalize the language according to his own situation. It also facilitates novel combinations rather than the recital of a series of dialogues learned by rote and which he may not be able to manipulate for his own purposes.

4. Offer the learner choice

As has been shown, the materials attempt to allow the learner choice both in terms of what he will say (to facilitate personal involvement in the message) and how he will say it. The existence of such choice means that there is always some doubt in the learner's mind about what is to follow. This requires the ability to interpret and negotiate meanings, which is an important aspect of communicative competence. Language courses in the past have tended to over-control the learner's use of language, which did little to develop his ability to cope with real communicative situations, where there is always negotiation through feedback as each speaker evaluates the effect of what he is saying on the other person.

There can be degrees of choice, as in the example shown

Tu as un animal?		
Asking others if they have a pet Saying that you have a puppy Saying that you have a dog and a budgie	Tu as un animal (à la maison)? (Vous avez)	Oui, j'ai un chiot J'ai un chien et une perruche

FIGURE 1

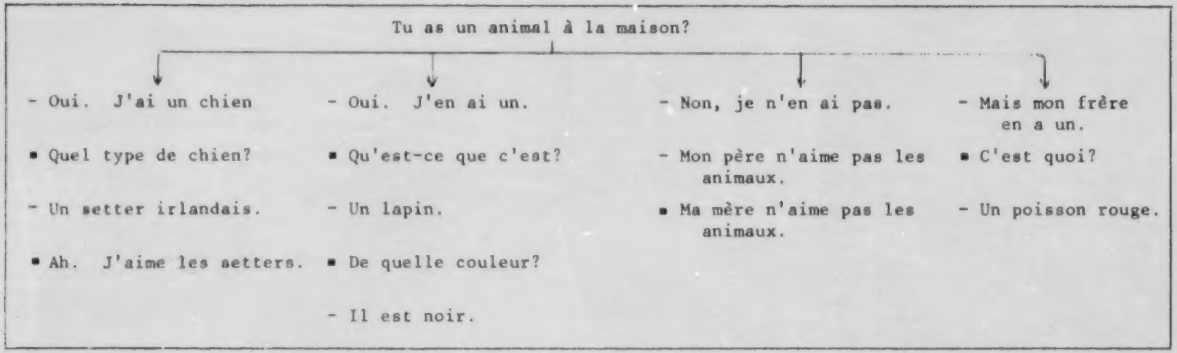

Tu as un animal à la maison?
- Oui. J'ai un chien
• Quel type de chien?
- Un setter irlandais.
• Ah. J'aime les setters.
- Oui. J'en ai un.
• Qu'est-ce que c'est?
- Un lapin.
• De quelle couleur?
- Il est noir.
- Non, je n'en ai pas.
- Mon père n'aime pas les animaux.
• Ma mère n'aime pas les animaux.
- Mais mon frère en a un.
• C'est quoi?
- Un poisson rouge.

FIGURE 2

in figure 3, where pupils practise making a suggestion about what to do with free time, agreeing to or rejecting the suggestion (and possibly proposing an alternative course of action). They can choose from various language forms in all the speech acts and have at least some choice in their responses to the suggestion made.

5. Establish differentiated objectives

The project is concerned with teaching language across the ability range in the belief that all can learn to use a second language to some degree but that some learn more slowly than others. It is appreciated that all pupils do not learn the same thing at the same time in the same way and that all pupils should have a rewarding language learning experience which will encourage them to continue with the study of the language or to return to language study later on. The defined objectives, which are clear, realistic and attainable, are intended to allow the pupil to appreciate his progress. Remedial work for slower pupils and extension work for faster learners are included along with group work activities which allow for different learning speeds.

The project materials attempt to accommodate a wide range of ability by setting the same communicative objective for all but with differentiated language forms and differentiation within the specified tasks.

(a) Differentiated language forms

It has been shown that the learner can be offered choice in the language he will use to communicate his message. This is fundamental to the design of the project materials and is based on the fact that form and meaning are not in a one-to-one relationship. One meaning can be expressed with a variety of forms and one form may serve several meanings. The form vous voulez ... can perform several functions, e.g. inviting - 'vous voulez venir?', inquiring - 'vous voulez partir?', requesting - 'vous voulez faire la vaisselle, s'il vous plaît', commanding - 'vous voulez vous taire!', or checking - 'vous voulez faire ça, n'est-ce pas?'

Similarly one meaning can have several forms, e.g. asking where the post office is could be expressed as 'La poste, s'il vous plaît?', 'Où est la poste, s'il vous plaît?', 'Il y a une poste par ici?', 'Pour aller à la poste?' As the project materials are designed primarily according to units of meaning rather than form, the learner has the possibility of choosing any one of the above forms, which is after all sufficient for productive purposes. He would,

ECRIVEZ DES DIALOGUES!

Make new dialogues using these suggestions:
WORK IN PAIRS!

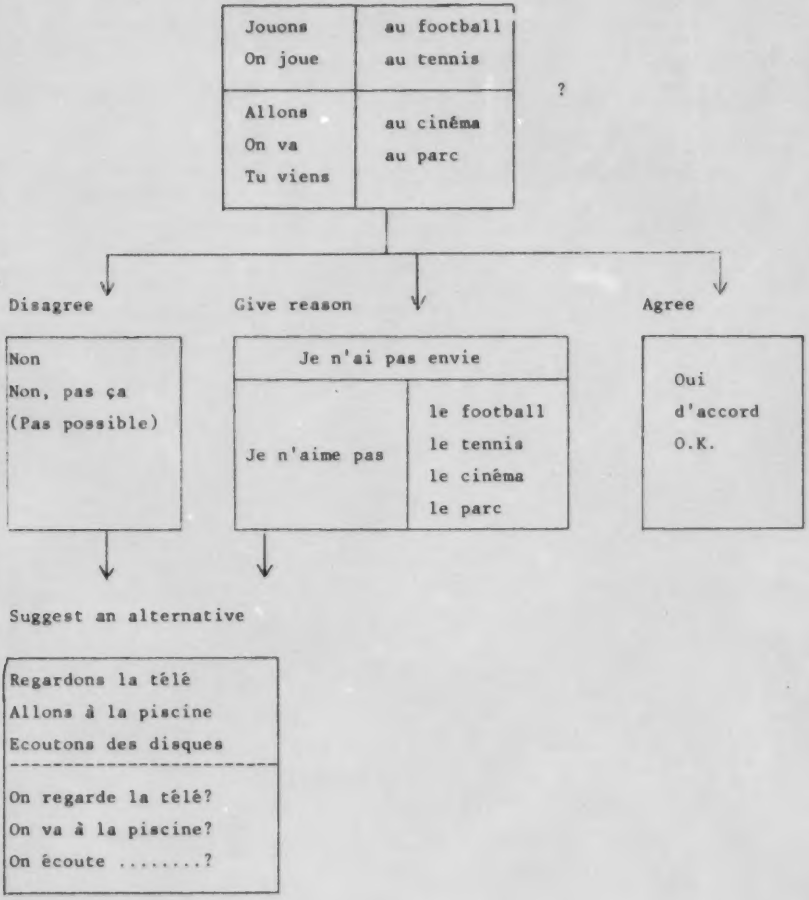
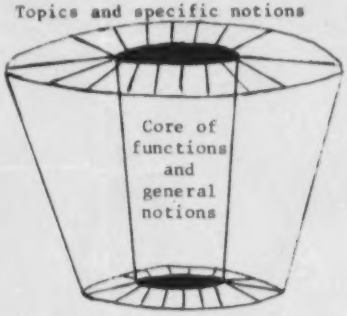


FIGURE 3

however, be expected to understand at least some of the other forms, which is obviously much easier for him to do. Some pupils will productively master several or all of the forms, while others will manage only the simplest one. Nevertheless, all can perform the same communicative task regardless of which form is used, and the efforts of the slower learner are rewarded by his knowing that he can perform the specified task. Because of the cyclic nature of the materials, the language functions will reappear in later units with an increasing variety of forms so that the slower learner will have the opportunity gradually to acquire them also for his productive repertoire. The cyclic approach is invaluable in that a fairly wide range of functions or meanings can be taught early on with a limited number of grammatical forms, so that communicative activities can be practised in class from the beginning. As the same language functions reappear in new communicative tasks, more forms appropriate to the performance of the tasks can be added and vocabulary is also extended, as illustrated by Trim (1978, p.25):



(b) Differentiated objectives within the same task

While extra aids can be built into the materials to assist the slower learners, it is also possible to enable them to participate in a whole class activity where all perform the same task but some to a less demanding degree. In the exercise shown in figure 4 the pupils, who have already read the shopping list written out by Yves' mother, listen to her comments as Yves unpacks the groceries on his return from the shopping expedition. The fact that the pupils have been able to 'eavesdrop' on some of Yves' shopping activities at the market (on tape) already provides them with some guide to what he bought or which items weren't available. Weaker pupils could be asked to write down only one or two items in any column or might be requested to concentrate on only one or two columns, e.g. the intonation features might make column (e) quite easy to

Yves went to get the messages on the list.

Listen to Yves and his mother discussing the goods as he unpacks them.

He did not get exactly what was on the list.

Write on the chart (a) What he bought correctly.
(b) What wasn't available.
(c) What he bought instead.
(d) What he forgot to buy.
(e) Purchases Yves' mother objects to

(a) Correct purchases	(b) Items not available	(c) Items bought instead	(d) Purchases he forgot	(e) Purchases his mother objects to

FIGURE 4

interpret. The remaining columns could be used for extension work for faster learners in a group work listening activity.

6. Set meaningful communicative tasks

Pupils tend to respond to the challenge of an interesting or meaningful task where there is an information gap to be bridged or a problem to be solved. If pupil A has certain information which pupil B lacks but requires, then a meaningful though simulated communicative task can be set; e.g. A and B each have a different section of the T.V. programme and must agree on which programme(s) to watch that evening, or A has four fairly similar pictures, B has a copy of one of them and A must question B to find out which of the pictures he has.

Tasks based on authentic documents are a feature of the project materials. For example, in one exercise in Salut!, Unit 5, the learner must solve a problem using the information supplied in a train timetable. He must constantly refer back to the written indications about each train. This exercise has the added educational benefit of helping the pupil learn to decode what must at first sight seem a frighteningly complex document.

7. Encourage independent learning

The materials attempt to assist pupils in learning how to learn. Pupils are encouraged to assume an active role in selecting content and learning experiences in the belief that learning is facilitated when the subject matter is relevant to the purposes of the learner, when learning is acquired through doing, when the pupil assumes increased responsibility for his own learning, when learning is self-initiated, involving both the intellect and the feelings of the learner, and when self-evaluation is encouraged. In such an approach the teacher's concern is no longer with the faithful implementation of a rigorously defined teaching method but rather with how best to facilitate the ongoing learning process within the learner himself. The teacher's role is one of guide, manager or facilitator, a partner in the learning process.

There are, accordingly, a great variety of text types and related exercise types to assist pupils with the learning activities in the hope that the needs of all will be in some way catered for. These exercises are too numerous to illustrate but include connecting, recognition, true/false, multiple choice, word scramble, restoration, defective dialogue,

picture stimulus, underlining and highlighting, guided interaction, open composition, note-taking and note-making exercises (cf. Candlin 1981). These exercises are particularly useful in helping the learner 'unlock' authentic texts which are a regular feature of the materials and in stimulating both controlled and free expression. For many of its insights regarding appropriate exercises the project is indebted to the guidance of Christoph Edelhoff, Director of the Hessisches Institut fUr Lehrerfortbildung, who has participated in one of the in-service courses for project teachers.

8. An integrated approach to the 'skills'

(a) Integration

The four 'skills' have traditionally tended to be taught separately for reasons of convenience. This is an artificial practice because they are more often integrated in real communication. One listens and speaks, listens and writes (takes notes at a lecture, takes down a 'phone message), reads and writes (reads a camping brochure, writes to book accommodation), reads and speaks (reads a T.V. programme schedule and decides with a friend which programme(s) to watch), or reads, speaks and writes (reads a mail order advertisement, discusses it with someone, and writes to order the product).

The materials attempt to give regular practice with integrated skills so that the learner can develop his communicative ability, i.e. his ability to interpret and respond appropriately. Strategies to encourage this are implemented in pairs and group work activities which primarily involve listening and speaking or reading and speaking. Combinations of listening or reading with writing tend to be individual activities.

There are numerous listening, reading, speaking and writing tasks in the materials. One illustration is the following exercise, to be found in Salut!, Unit 3: the pupils read an extract from a television guide, listen to two French children who are arguing about which programme they will watch, then in a follow-on activity give their own views and undertake a similar oral task based on that day's programme schedule for Irish television.

(b) Listening and speaking

The ongoing speech reflects and requires the feedback given by the addressee(s), and a process of mutual adjustment is evident as the roles of addressor and

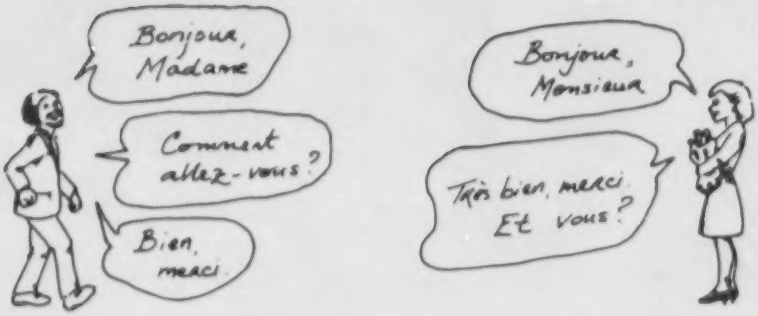
> addressee are continually exchanged. The implications for a teaching methodology are clear: often we cannot restrict our focus to speaking or listening but must consider both skills together. (Geddes 1981)

One means of integrating skills is to afford pupils ample opportunity to listen and speak to one another. Pairs and group work activities are ideal for this. The project materials give plenty of assistance with pairs work in the early stages, and exercises like those shown in figure 5 are designed for oral practice, although they are also used for copy-writing in the very beginning. These activities allow the pupil to practise imitating as well as responding (traditionally the teacher initiates and pupils respond) and free the teacher to move around and assist pupils where necessary. The stimuli in English (or Irish) can gradually be introduced in French at a later stage.

Classroom interaction between pupils is concerned with the fluent selection of appropriate utterances rather than the accurate production of isolated utterances in drills, although these are often a necessary prerequisite. Role-play and games play an important part whereby the learner takes on a role (if he cannot be himself) and interacts with others. What each says in the interaction is determined by his role, him communicative intentions and the contributions of the other speaker(s). On a methodological note, it is implied here that at certain times the teacher must be prepared to tolerate those errors which do not interfere with communication so that the learner does not feel inhibited through a constant fear of making mistakes which may in any case result from his genuine attempts to evolve communicative strategies for coping with the situation or task in hand. This is a process which he must feel free to attempt if he is to acquire a communicative ability. Errors can be noted and attended to in a language practice phase where forms are practised.

It is indeed difficult for the teacher to monitor pairs and group work in a class of thirty pupils. Both activities are encouraged in the project and group work seems to have been particularly neglected in the past. In one exercise (figure 6) the pupils question one another about the home chores they perform and transfer the information to the supplied chart, scoring each member of the group according to the scale jamais - 0 points, quelquefois - 1 point, toujours - 2 points. To ensure that quieter pupils participate as fully as possible, a cross-grouping activity can follow where each student moves to a new group and must report on the activities (or non-activities) of his colleagues in his former group.

Listening is not merely considered a passive or receptive



Dialogue 9 Exercice 6

(1) Monsieur Duclos meets Madame Lacoste. They have known each other for some time. Fill in the rest of their conversation.

M. Duclos _____ , Madame.

Mme Lacoste Bonjour, _____ .

M. Duclos _____ allez-vous?

Mme Lacoste _____ , merci. Et _____ ?

M. Duclos Bien, _____ .

(2) Madame Gantier meets Madame Pinet. They know one another slightly. Using the guidelines given, write their conversation.

Mme Gantier _____ .
(says hello)

Mme Pinet _____ .
(says hello)

Mme Gantier _____ ?
(asks how Mme Pinet is)

Mme Pinet _____ ?
(says she is well, asks how Mme Gantier is)

Mme Gantier _____ .
(says she is well)

FIGURE 5

Prénom	range sa chambre	fait son lit	fait la vaisselle	passe l'aspirateur	fait les courses	Points

FIGURE 6

Listen to the five boys and girls from different parts of France describing where they live. The first boy, Philippe, comes from Vichy. Look at the notes about him. Make similar notes about the other boys and girls. Write notes about yourself in the last column.

Logement (mode de)

Maison
immeuble

Où
en ville
en banlieu
dans un village
à la campagne

au nord
au sud
au centre
à l'ouest
à l'est

de la
France

Philippe	Brigitte	Christine	René	Odile	Moi
appartement Vichy					

FIGURE 7

skill but one which demands the active involvement of the learner, who must actively draw on knowledge from both linguistic and non-linguistic sources in order to reconstruct the message that the speaker intends. The distinction is made in the listening activities between understanding of details and gist comprehension, where the learner needs only to understand the part of the message required for his own purposes. Authentic texts and semi-authentic texts are used (the latter consist of taped conversations where French children speak about a given topic with the aid of rather loose guidelines which allow them considerable freedom of expression) so that the pupil can learn to cope with spontaneous speech with its hesitations, ungrammatical features, incomplete utterances, mid-utterance changes of direction, and variations of accent.

Guidance and a purpose in listening are provided by exercises which prompt the learner to listen for specific features or make inferences from what he hears. He may be asked to perform a physical task (e.g. matching and ordering pictures in relation to utterances, listening to and following directions on a map), to transfer information (e.g. into tabular form), or to reformulate and evaluate information (e.g. summaries, notes, his own opinions). Figure 7 illustrates an exercise in transfer of information where the table structures the listening activity by creating expectations as to the meanings which will occur in the text. The pupils could later be asked to reformulate this information in the form of notes.

Equally important is listening for the social aspect of language whereby the learner must pay close attention to linguistic forms which the speakers select. The task is to interpret the discourse in terms of who is talking to whom, what is their social (formal/informal) and psychological (attitude) relationship and what they are talking about. Sensitivity to these features is vital for the appropriate use of language (in speech and writing) in relation to the social and psychological dimensions of any communicative situation.

Finally, but equally important, there is an effort to supply listening material for pleasure as well as for information related to themes of interest to the learner's age-group and sex.

(c) Reading/writing

Reading texts are included for information and for pleasure and the learner is encouraged to develop an interpreting strategy in dealing with them. They tend to be authentic or 'simple' accounts of authentic texts rather

than passages contrived to highlight particular structures. The 'simple account' is not a simplified version which paraphrases the original text but rather takes it as a source document and completely rewrites it. Some authentic documents are presented even in the very early stages, e.g. tourist brochures, cookery recipes, menus and common signs or notices. Texts are chosen for their interest, e.g. comic strip, courrier du coeur, features on pop stars, how to erect a tent, road safety etc., where there is a message or meaning to be 'unlocked' whether globally or in detail. On the methodological level care is taken to preserve the authenticity of these texts by using them in an 'authentic' way, i.e. for knowledge or pleasure rather than merely for exploiting structures.

This requires the learner to concentrate on the meaning rather than the form and certain types of exercises can facilitate this, for example, note-taking. The pupils hear a 'radio' news bulletin on an event, listen to interviews, and read newspaper accounts of the same happening. With the aid of a chart they compare the different accounts by making notes about specific features and they must interpret the various attitudes contained in the reports. This use of a variety of text types is a feature of the materials, particularly with regard to authentic documents.

It is perhaps unnecessary to add that correspondence with pen-pals is encouraged (pupils write in their own language but are given practice in writing letters in the target language) so that there are authentic documents readily available and which are of genuine personal interest. An effort is presently being made to establish a similar system for exchanging audio or video cassettes with schools abroad.

In the same way that communicative reading activities are concerned with the understanding of information or content, writing activities deal with the productive equivalent of this ability, the conveying of such information. The sea of red ink poured by teachers on to students' copies tends to be more a judgement on structural shortcomings than on the overall success or failure of a piece of writing to convey its message. The communicative approach is concerned not only with discrete utterances but also with how these combine in discourse, i.e. how they are joined together to form larger units in a meaningful flow of ideas to convey a message.

To encourage this approach to writing, attention is drawn to aspects of paragraph writing and passage organization. For example, the faulty teleprinter transmits a jumbled

message including some information which doesn't belong there. The pupils must cross out the wrong passages, collect the others and put them in the right order before comparing their version with the original message. At a more advanced level they are given the first paragraph of a passage and asked to suggest how the following paragraph might look. They are then given the actual second paragraph to compare with their versions and so on. This could equally be done in reverse order - by commencing with the last paragraph.

Restoration exercises in the form of gap-texts serve to bring together relevant information from several previous texts (listening or reading) and the result is a new text, perhaps a diary or a letter. For example, a boy and girl meet on a camp-site abroad and compare tastes in music. They write a diary and a letter to friends about the encounter. The pupils are supplied with a gap-text of these accounts which they complete on the basis of the notes they took while listening to the original meeting. Note-taking can then be developed into note-making, where the learner records his own thoughts and experiences stimulated by this study of the texts.

These project materials, within the context of the bank of other language resources made available to pupils, aim to make language learning effective and enjoyable (guidelines for classroom games are supplied), to provide the learner with a rewarding experience and the techniques which will encourage him to continue with the study of a foreign language, if not now, at a later stage. In order that the pupil's sense of accomplishment be fully achieved there is a need for a review of the present means of testing his communicative ability. The implications of this are beyond the scope of this paper and will be referred to later in the Convention. It should be pointed out, however, that pupils are encouraged to assess their own performance of the communicative tasks and to have this checked by the teacher.

For the teacher, involvement in designing syllabuses, materials and tests provides an ongoing form of in-service training. There is a shift in emphasis from teaching to learning and the focus is finally on the learner, his needs, interests, attitude and aptitudes. The teacher is no longer a narrator who deposits knowledge which the pupil patiently receives, repeats and memorizes, and who justifies his own existence by the latter's ignorance. He is rather a participant in the learning situation, a guide and manager to the pupils.

One hopes that teachers will not be unduly discouraged by the fact that in the earlier stages some pupils seem to

'know' less of the target language than those who follow a more traditional course. Perhaps this is because of the emphasis on skills and abilities, on the learner's ability to use the language in his repertoire, i.e. it is not so much a question of how much he knows but what he can do with that knowledge. Dick Emery, in one of his comedy sketches, has illustrated this quite entertainingly. The baby in the cot (played by Emery, appropriately costumed) excitedly attracts his father's attention:

Baby: Daddy! Daddy! Listen, I can speak French.

Father: Don't be silly. You can hardly speak English yet.

Baby: I can, I can!

Father: Oh, alright. Let's hear you then.

Baby: Venez ici. (Long pause)

Father: Well, go on ... (Long pause) Is that it? What use is that little piece of French? I mean, supposing you want to tell someone to go over there, what can you do? (Pointing to far corner of room)

Baby: (Slight pause) Oh well, in that case I crawl over there and say 'Venez ici'.

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V REFORM IN THE OFFICIAL CURRICULA AND EXAMINATIONS

Control of post-primary curricula and examinations in the Irish educational system rests with the Department of Education, which acts on the advice of Syllabus Committees for the various subjects taught. The troubled history of Syllabus Committees for modern languages over the last fifteen years gives some indication of the difficulties involved in effecting changes in official curricula and examinations in Ireland. The last major revision of modern language curricula took place in 1969, when the current syllabus was introduced. This syllabus was approved by the Modern Languages Syllabus Committee subject to the introduction of oral examinations which would test the acquisition of the oral/aural skills component of the syllabus. Following the Department's failure to respond to repeated requests for oral examinations the Modern Languages Syllabus Committee resigned in 1972, refusing to reconvene until an undertaking to introduce oral examinations was given. Seven years were to elapse before this commitment was made by the then Minister for Education, Mr John Wilson T.D., in December 1979. On that occasion Mr Wilson promised the phased introduction of oral examinations, a review of the entire second-level syllabus for foreign languages, and the convening of separate Syllabus Committees for French, German, Spanish and Italian. That was over two years ago. The present situation in relation to these Syllabus Committees is outlined in the following accounts from representatives of the language associations concerned. These accounts make it clear that although some progress has been made, the present situation is far from approximating to what is required or what was promised in December 1979.

V.i THE POSITION OF GERMAN

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The German Syllabus Committee exists only on paper and even that is only in tentative form. The German Teachers' Association - GDI - received notice in May 1981 that a Syllabus Committee was to be convened at an unspecified time in the future. The unfortunate truth is that almost nothing is being done for German - at official level. This intolerable position continues despite numerous appeals to the Department of Education on behalf of teachers of German.

There is no doubt that the position would improve immediately if we at least had an inspector for German in the Department, with special responsibility for German, who would look after the interests of German and act as a co-ordinator between the Department and the schools in all matters relating to curriculum and examinations.

A native German language adviser was appointed in 1980 under special arrangement with the German government to work in co-operation with an Irish opposite number in the Department here - in other words, he expected, under the terms of his contract, to work with our inspector for German. To our shame there was no inspector when he arrived here. There is still no inspector in January 1982. As the inspector for German would chair the Syllabus Committee meetings, it is clear that the Syllabus Committee has no hope of being convened until the post of inspector is filled. Meanwhile, a bad situation gradually deteriorates. Things do not stand still, least of all in teaching and learning.

We listened with interest to Mr Boland's remarks last night when he said that, once it has been established that reform is necessary, we should not be deterred, even if certain positions are challenged or changed. Certainly, as soon as reform <u>is</u> initiated by the Department, German teachers are ready and more than willing to carry it through the schools. We have a necessarily small but very active Association. Its activities are greatly enhanced by the unfailing support of the German government and the Goethe-Institut, who provide expertise and financial assistance and place their resources always freely at the disposal of teachers and students.

Speakers at GDI seminars in recent years have generally been experts in the field of communicative teaching and there is usually a workshop session during which we try out the ideas of the main session, if this is possible, or discuss their practical application. The German government and the Goethe-Institut have been instrumental in bringing some leading experts to Ireland, and seminars and lectures are often open to all interested persons from every language area. For most German teachers this is as near as we can get to in-service courses because in-service courses are not provided for German in the same way as for French. On the occasions when the Department sanctions a so-called in-service course in German, it means in practice that the course is organized and carried through by the Goethe-Institut. Courses in Germany are availed of mainly as German government DAAD scholarships. Our Department offers three two-month scholarships in Germany every year, but leave of absence is subject to the school managers' approval, which may be withheld, and the individual teacher is responsible for paying her substitute. In these two important areas of teacher training at home and in Germany the input from our side, the Irish side, is minimal and these are areas that need attention now, not some time after the Syllabus Committee meets. In many ways 1982 is already too late, but we cannot turn back the clock. We simply must have proper preparation of teachers if pupils are to be prepared for the proposed new modern language examinations in 1985. These are all areas which have received no attention for years because there is no co-ordinator at official level.

German teachers have been involved since its inception in the I.T.É. Modern Languages Project which Joe Sheils described this morning. That work has been in progress since 1977 and a pre-pilot First Year German is now being used in a number of schools. The pilot scheme will begin in September 1982. The German group welcomes anybody interested in working on new materials or assessing some of the existing materials in their own classroom. You can contact the German group at I.T.É., 31 Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin 2 (telephone 76 54 89). Here again we feel the lack of an inspector and a Syllabus Committee to co-ordinate the project work and bring the examinations into line to reflect this approach to teaching German.

We cannot teach in isolation and our pupils cannot learn in isolation, yet it could be said that the examination papers are the principal line of communication between the Department and the teachers, since a syllabus is almost non-existent. You all know the printed syllabus which states that 'the main aims of the teaching (of German) should be to enable the pupils (a) to understand German as spoken by an educated

native ....' This point alone has such far-reaching implications that we would expect a long pause, long enough for maybe several Syllabus Committee meetings to examine it fully, but no, it merits only a comma before we rush on through (b) and (c) and (d) and more. In theory at least, a pupil need never be troubled by the sound of spoken German, as an oral examination still seems remote. Even recent examination papers sometimes display a written German which would never actually be spoken by any living German, educated or otherwise. Some of the tasks set as essays or translations would daunt any but the toughest of the species. There are alternatives and David Little will be considering these this afternoon. The written examinations are a further example of an already bad situation gradually deteriorating in the absence of review and reform by a Syllabus Committee under an inspector: in the absence of a syllabus to direct and, I dare say, inspire the teaching, teachers themselves are trying to make language learning more alive and meaningful, despite the system.

German teachers gather each year for what history records as the 'Night of the Leaving' and the findings of that meeting are then sent to the Department - the Department at large, almost, as there is nobody whose special responsibility it would be to claim such communications and respond to them in deed or word. At the level at which close co-operation should exist, we are painfully aware that our findings are not passed on to a person responsible for German. Teachers are also disquieted by the difference between the grades awarded in German and French in the Certificate examinations. Year after year very good pupils get a lower grade in German than in French for no good reason that their teachers can see. This militates against German and affects the choice of German as a Leaving Certificate subject when another subject is considered a safer option for points. German exists always in the shadow of French. French is obviously stronger in terms of numbers and resources. It is further strengthened by the provision of personnel, residential courses for teachers both here and in France, a well-established assistant scheme, pilot orals, and so on. Significantly, the French Syllabus Committee is well under way. In a great many schools no alternative modern language is offered and pupils and parents alike regard French as a compulsory subject when, in fact, 'a language other than Irish and English' would meet Department requirements. Some of our best friends are French teachers, but the imbalance is not constructive. It would be a very very unenlightened language teacher indeed who would compartmentalize the four languages under consideration today and focus on one to the exclusion of the others. If we believe in our own particular language, we must surely believe in modern languages in themselves and aim to give our pupils the sense of discovery

and fun that languages generate. The discussion yesterday evening showed that our languages have very practical applications too, and we have been reminded, lest we forget, that there are more than our four languages in the wider spectrum. Therefore I will not even utter the word 'minority' language, which is such an entirely relative term. We are all in the same boat, only the words for it are - slightly - different. There should be no need to think of ourselves as adrift on little rafts that may be swept away by the next tidal wave from the good ship 'Vive la France'. The fact that so many concerned language teachers are assembled here today is very heartening and let us hope that this may be the first of many joint ventures between the languages.

I have tried to outline the position of German in relation to curriculum and examinations. While we would of course like to draw hope and encouragement from Mr Boland's remarks about reform and his references to a Curriculum and Examinations Board, it must be said that on 30 January 1982 the position of German is every bit as bleak as I have painted it.

V.ii THE POSITION OF ITALIAN

Elizabeth Delaney
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Dublin

The Leaving Certificate Italian Syllabus Committee was reconvened on 4 June 1981. Invited to attend were two representatives from the Joint Managerial Body and one each from the Vocational Educational Committee, the Teachers' Union of Ireland, the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland, the Association of Teachers of Italian, the National University of Ireland, and Trinity College, Dublin. It was a disappointing start to the proceedings to observe that there were no representatives present from the A.S.T.I., the V.E.C. and the J.M.B.

The main purpose of the meeting was to review the existing Leaving Certificate Syllabus and consequently the examination paper. The oral element was discussed first. The principle of an oral examination has always been accepted

by the Italian teachers. There are, however, two big problems, i.e. the reliability of assessment and the weighting of the oral as against the written paper. Italian wants to be in line with the Syllabus Committees of the other languages, and therefore some co-ordination between these Committees is essential.

The compulsory oral examination will be introduced in 1985; the same oral test will be used for both both levels, Higher and Ordinary, with separate written papers as at present. In 1982 and 1983 the oral test will be available in a pilot scheme for a limited number of schools who volunteer. In 1984 there will be an optional test for all schools. Provisionally, 25 per cent of the total marks, i.e. 100, will be allotted to the oral test, with 300 marks for the written paper.

Before examining the content of the written paper, the Committee discussed the examination itself. As only 8 per cent of second level pupils continue on to university level, the examination would have to be considered a terminal one for schools rather than an entrance examination for university. Communication is of paramount importance. By the end of his last year in school a pupil should be able to communicate in Italian: greet and introduce people, understand public notices at airports, railway stations, shops etc., and make his needs known in these places, communicate by telephone or letter, answer an advertisement, fill in a form, read a magazine, newspaper or book. Italian teachers believe in the communicative approach: the examinations of the past few years already reflect this. There has always been a conversation and a letter on the paper, either in the essay section or in the translation, and we want to continue this.

The essay is a test of creative ability and we considered this a worthwhile test. This creative writing could be confined to letter writing and writing conversations, as this is more in keeping with the present communicative emphasis in the classroom. The Higher Level paper could include an essay based on a picture, as well as a discursive one on the progress and problems of present-day living.

The Ordinary Level comprehension test was also considered worthwhile. There were suggestions that to test comprehension, more taxing questions could be asked in English, or multiple choice answers could be given in Italian. Most of those present were in favour of the questions in English. In the translation from Italian to English section, precision and accuracy are tested. Fluency in English is also required. This question sorts out the better candidate. We were in favour of retaining this question until a better substitute was found.

The value of the formal structural grammar question lies in the fact that many grammatical structures can be examined through the use of commonplace words. It was suggested that we keep the (a) type exercise, i.e. changing from direct to indirect speech, and extend it to include a variety of structures.

There were many and conflicting opinions on the matter of retaining the set texts question on the Higher Level paper. There is the problem of how best to test literature at that level. An optional question on literature might be a solution. This would be a priority matter on the agenda for the next meeting, which was to have been held on 1 October last, but which was postponed because of the delays in the Leaving and Intermediate Certificate results. We have received no notice of the next meeting. We would like Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann to be represented at our meetings so that information on communicative testing is available.

From this report it is evident that we are only exploring the possibilities of a change to a syllabus more geared to the communicative approach to language teaching, which is considered appropriate for all pupils today. It is to be regretted that after such a promising beginning so much time has passed without a follow-up meeting. In the meantime we hope to keep in touch with the work of the two French Committees - the Intermediate Certificate Syllabus Committee as well as the Leaving Certificate Syllabus Committee - who have had many meetings and have made such good progress that they have already introduced an oral test.

V.iii THE POSITION OF SPANISH

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Booterstown

Meeting of the Spanish Syllabus Committee

The Spanish Leaving Certificate Syllabus Committee has had, to date, one meeting only, held on Wednesday 3 June 1981.

The Committee's terms of reference were to make recommendations on the content of the syllabus for the Leaving Certificate examinations. The particular task of the Committee now is to look at the implications for the syllabus of the introduction of a compulsory oral element from 1985 at Leaving Certificate. After much discussion a tentative programme was suggested as follows:

1982 - Oral Pilot Scheme I to be held in perhaps ten schools;

1983 - Oral Pilot Scheme II to be held in about thirty schools;

1984 - the oral should be an optional element for all;

1985 - the oral should be a compulsory element for all, worth 25 per cent of the total marks;

by 1989 - the oral should be a compulsory element for all, worth 40 per cent of the total marks.

The Spanish Teachers' Association would prefer to see no optional year, and also that the oral should be worth the full 40 per cent of the marks straight away in 1989.

The agenda for the next meeting is to contain the following items for discussion:

1. Ordinary Level

   (a) Is the essay-type question suitable? If not, what other types of question eliciting original free speech could be substituted?

   (b) What sorts of grammar question would be more suitable and natural at this level?

   (c) What other type of question would one like to see on this paper?

2. Higher Level

   (a) Should candidates have to do both a discursive type essay and a narrative one? Is it fair that there should be alternatives as at present?

   (b) What is a suitable format for testing the set books?

<u>The Syllabus Committee is in fact an Examination Committee</u>

As can be seen, the Syllabus Committee is not in fact concerned with syllabus except indirectly, as there is no

syllabus for modern languages except in such general and hence vague terms as 'competence' and 'easy prose' and 'passages of a reasonable standard'. The Committee is concerned only with examinations, from which teachers may glean clues as to what the examiner expects the syllabus to be.

But there are problems ...

We are very pleased to have a Syllabus Committee that has met. It provides that essential link with the Department of Education, the examining body, for which teachers of Spanish have been asking for years. It is the only official channel through which secondary teachers have any hope of influencing what appears on the papers, and hence what they are expected to teach. Imagine our disappointment then when recently we were informed, incredible though it may seem, that there are no plans for any further meetings. At the very least this makes a nonsense of the timetable so hopefully drawn up at our one meeting.

But why does this sort of thing always happen to Spanish? How can the French teachers manage to go ahead with plans and reforms and pilot schemes when we are thwarted on all sides? The answer must be that there is a French inspector, but there is no Spanish inspector. Mr Ó Cathán is very helpful to us, but he is responsible for Irish and Italian as well as Spanish. It is not surprising that he has no time to chair meetings. But from our point of view this is not good enough. If Spanish is to be saved as a school subject, we must as a matter of urgency have someone in the Department of Education who has time for it. In the cultural agreement signed recently with Spain, Ireland undertook to foster the teaching of Spanish here. A most basic requirement for this is that somebody in the Department should be given the task of fostering it.

Gone with the Syllabus Committee is official second level involvement in what the papers look like. So we are back once again in our desperate situation. The Spanish Teachers' Association has had to make many complaints in the past about the Spanish examinations, Intermediate and Leaving Certificate, culminating in a furore this year with strong representations by us and by many private individuals to the Department of Education, and even a backwash in the public press. The Department even admitted that one of the papers this year had been an 'unfortunate mistake'. But how do these unfortunate mistakes happen? They happen because the papers are set and checked by people who do not teach at second level. The people involved have no wish to be unfair; they simply have no idea what to expect from Intermediate and Leaving Certificate

candidates. And what is more, the people who set and check the Spanish papers appear to have no contact with those who set the French and German papers. There is no attempt at all to maintain any overall standard between the various modern languages in any one year. This is no good. It is essential that we have (a) second level involvement in testing and (b) a careful check on standards from year to year and from subject to subject.

The problem of standards

As we have no defined syllabus, it is essential that any Spanish paper be of a standard comparable to any Spanish paper of the same level in any previous year. For this not to be so is equivalent to changing the syllabus suddenly on the day of the examination, and without warning. It should also be of a similar standard to papers in French, German and Italian at the same level. For this not to be so is to be discriminatory in the extreme against the language whose paper is hardest. Examination success carries with it great prestige, and, paradoxically enough, this prestige reflects not only on the candidate but also on the subject in which he is successful. Candidates in ensuing years will choose those subjects most likely to bring them the prestige of success, and those subjects most often chosen become in themselves most prestigious. Spanish papers, at Intermediate Certificate especially, have been so difficult that they only carry with them the threat of failure. They certainly bring no prestige to candidate or school, or, by the reasoning above, to Spanish as a subject. In fact, the extreme difficulty and unpredictability of Spanish papers at Intermediate, and now at Leaving Certificate level, has caused teachers of Spanish to feel that the Department is trying to phase out the subject altogether by totally discrediting it and teachers of Spanish.

The Department of Education justifies its lack of concern for comparable standards by ensuring that results are standardized, and this in two ways. First, when it feels that complaints are justified about a paper, it compensates for this in the marking scheme. But this, if a well-meaning gesture, is still a ludicrous one. A paper that is not matched to the general ability and knowledge of the candidates cannot discriminate effectively between candidates. To try to make up for this by giving a blanket palliative of ten marks, or whatever, to all candidates to be added to a mark that is not very meaningful really does not make the results any more fitting. It has been said that while a teacher may get the anticipated number of As and Bs or whatever, these do not necessarily go to the candidate to whom one would expect them to go.

Secondly, the Department argues that its results are fair if they all fall, or can be made to fall, into the same normal curve. In other words, it expects the proportion of As, Bs, Cs, or whatever, to be the same in the results of all the languages. But it may well be the case, as with the Leaving Certificate Higher Course in Spanish, for instance, that this subject is taken at this level by students of above average language ability. This is not the case with French, which is the subject which the majority of candidates requiring a foreign language will sit. It is mistaken, therefore, to argue, as does the Department of Education, that if there is a greater proportion of As, Bs and Cs in the results of the Spanish Higher Level examination than in French, this is because the paper was easier than the French paper. A paper's standard must surely be judged by the standard of what it sets out to test, and not by the results gained on that paper.

Second level involvement in testing

To ensure that standards are not only comparable but also suitable, we must have second level teachers of Spanish involved in the setting of papers. But there is a problem here, the problem of secrecy, which is so much greater in languages than in any subject which has a defined content syllabus. If a language teacher sets a certain passage on an examination paper his students will have an unfair advantage over all other candidates because he and only he will know exactly what knowledge he expected of a candidate when he went in search of a suitable passage to test that knowledge. It could be argued that the problem of secrecy could be overcome by having a bank of questions sent in by second level teachers of Spanish, and no one would know when his question would come up. Even in that case, I would argue, the pupils of the teachers whose questions are chosen in any one year have an advantage over other candidates. Also the problems of standards and unpredictability might be even greater than they are at present.

All these problems are greatly diminished if a defined content syllabus is accepted by the Department

And so it is clear that a defined content syllabus, preferably drawn up by second level teachers of Spanish, is a most basic need. But such a syllabus is being worked on by Sheila Rolands and Miriam Macken in the Spanish section of the I.T.É. Modern Languages Project. Trojan work has also been done by Catherine Dunne and Paul Maher in the development of materials to help teachers to try out the

syllabus. All this is done under the chairmanship of Dr Eamonn Rodgers. We cannot be too grateful to these five people and to I.T.É., who have so generously funded the venture in Spanish as in the other languages.

As far as we are concerned, it is essential that the Department of Education provide teachers with a defined syllabus, especially now, with the revolution in teaching methods and materials that the introduction of an oral examination presupposes. We ask it either to accept this syllabus, or else get to work on one itself, involving second level teachers of Spanish, as soon as possible. With a defined content syllabus, the problems of standards and inappropriateness must be greatly reduced.

We therefore call upon the Department of Education immediately to take these first steps in their declared intention to foster the teaching of the Spanish language in Irish schools, namely to appoint an inspector of Spanish and to provide a defined content syllabus for Spanish for Intermediate and Leaving Certificate courses.

V.iv THE POSITION OF FRENCH - INTERMEDIATE CERTIFICATE

Ann Hyland
Community School
Ramsgrange
New Ross
Co. Wexford

There have been three meetings of the French Intermediate Certificate Syllabus Committee since it was convened. To date it has drawn up a sample paper for a third option ('option C'), to be administered alongside the traditional Intermediate Certificate paper and the alternative paper in 1983. The reason for the decision to devise a third paper is that the traditional examination is obviously unsuited to candidates preparing for a Leaving Certificate oral examination, whilst the alternative examination cannot be administered by many teachers since arrangements for the examining of its oral component are a matter of dispute between the Department of

Education and the teachers' unions.

The suggested form and content of 'option C' are as follows:

A. Written paper

1. Essay - choice between picture series, letter, and dialogues suitable in given situations.
2. Grammar - five points to be tested.
3. Reading comprehension tests:
   - 3.1 Signs likely to be seen in France - multiple choice questions in English.
   - 3.2 Dialogues - questions in English.
   - 3.3 Narrative - questions in English.

B. Aural test

1. A number of short dialogues in context - one multiple choice question in English on each.
2. Short announcements such as one would hear in stations etc. - one question in English.
3. Longer dialogue - four multiple choice questions in English.
4. Narrative - four questions in English.

V.v THE POSITION OF FRENCH - LEAVING CERTIFICATE

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Dublin

The French Leaving Certificate Syllabus Committee began its deliberations on 16 January 1981. To date it has met seven times. Each of these sessions was held from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The bodies represented on this Syllabus Committee are: the Department of Education; the National University of

Ireland; Trinity College, Dublin; the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland; the Teachers' Union of Ireland; the Joint Managerial Body; the County Educational Officers' Association; and the French Teachers' Association (which I represent).

Since the Committee has reconvened to discuss syllabus and since members were conscious of the work currently being done by the I.T.É. Modern Languages Project towards a defined content syllabus, Joe Sheils was invited to address one of the first meetings. This address and the many contributions made by members of the I.T.É. project have meant that the spirit of the Committee's work has been influenced by principles of communicative teaching. However, the pupils who are participating at the moment in the first year of the I.T.É. pilot scheme will not be sitting the Leaving Certificate examination until 1986 or in some cases 1987, and the Syllabus Committee's deadline for a new-look Leaving Certificate examination in which written and oral/aural skills will be tested is 1985.

We are all aware that in the present set-up the teacher more or less deduces the syllabus from past examination papers. So for pragmatic reasons the Committee began a reappraisal of the present form of the Leaving Certificate Higher Level paper. The section of the paper most in need of revision seemed to be the 'thème' or translation into French. This is a very academic exercise - enjoyable for students interested in the grammatical workings of the language and useful if the student is to go on to study French at university - i.e. of use to a very tiny fraction of the French-learning population. It was felt that a slot in the Higher Level paper to test basic structures was necessary. Various types of test were examined. The Committee tended to favour a kind of cloze test, where the gaps to be left were chosen strategically in order to test knowledge of particular structures. The underlying principles we agreed on for this test are as follows:

> In a passage of continuous prose the candidate is required to fill in blanks each representing the omission of one word. The omissions are selected to test candidates' knowledge of basic structures (genders, tense, prepositions etc.). A prose passage is preferred to situate these structures in a natural context.

From the very beginning I was aware that there was no point in my representing F.T.A. members if there were no input from teachers themselves. I tried sending out questionnaires; then I tried sending out a description of the form of examination that seemed to be emerging. I had

very few replies. Then the Dublin Branch Committee set up a sub-committee made up of teachers at second and third level to design tests, try them out in schools and feed in the conclusions to the Syllabus Committee. This sub-committee has been a great support to me; in fact there would hardly be any point in my being on the Syllabus Committee if it did not exist. I strongly recommend the setting-up of similar sub-committees in other F.T.A. branches.

When the Committee came to consider essay-writing the same criterion of usefulness tended to be applied. How useful is it to write 200 (often very imperfect) words on e.g. 'La condition de la femme'? It is certainly not something that one would ever dream of doing outside of an examination. The problem was to find some reasonably useful, natural exercise which would test the candidate's written French. Letter-writing was one obvious solution. We decided that both formal and informal letters should be included. This would test the candidate's awareness of 'niveaux de langue'. We agreed on the following rationale for this test:

> The ability to communicate in writing is most realistically experienced in the writing of letters. To achieve good results in letter-writing a sense of style and appropriateness of forms of address is essential. Both formal and informal letters are provided as stimuli.

It proved much more difficult to find other tests of productive written French that were not too contrived. Again, various tasks were considered. Writing a 'résumé' of a passage would certainly show whether or not a candidate could write French, but it also tests non-linguistic skills, e.g. the ability to see the main points in a passage (which poses problems for candidates even in English). Other suggestions which were considered more reasonable were the following:

> Picture stimulus - candidates might be asked to role-play as one of the characters.
>
> Telegram to be developed into a letter.
>
> Arresting news headline or picture which might evoke a strong reaction and therefore the use of affective language.
>
> Writing dialogue as narrative or narrative as dialogue.

It was felt here that the emphasis should be on variety of tasks so that no one of these would become fossilized for ever on the examination paper and therefore take up an inordinate amount of classroom time. The description we gave

here is therefore vague:

> A variety of exercises based on visual and written stimuli. These would be chosen to elicit an affective response from the candidate.

Many teachers are unhappy with the present situation in the Higher Level Leaving Certificate examination, where a literary text is set and then examined by a series of purely factual questions. The Committee considered at length the possibility of a separate literature paper. This would cause administrative problems. We are still considering a possible literature/civilization option within the existing paper. Ideas on this would be welcome.

What we produced in terms of reading comprehension were two passages, one literary, one journalistic, each followed by multiple choice questions. The criteria set down for these are as follows:

1. The passages chosen shall have been written in the twentieth century and shall not contain vocabulary or constructions it would be quite unreasonable to expect the candidates to know or guess at.

2. The questions should be designed to see whether the the candidate has understood the passage. This does not mean he should be expected to know every word. Questions of the type 'What is the meaning of the words in italics?' are to be avoided. The questions should be about the text and not the words, and might include questions about the tone or style of the text. As a general rule, questions should not reproduce closely the words of the text as this would provide easy clues.

3. There should be two texts, one literary and one non-literary. The form of the exercise is the same in each case. The texts may contain a few difficult words if the context is clear and if it is reasonable to expect the candidate to guess. This is not a vocabulary test.

4. The questions form part of the test. Not only is the text to be understood, but so are the questions. The questions are in French and should be so designed as not to provide direct clues nor to be answerable without reference to the text.

On the subject of weighting of marks, the tentative suggestion of the Committee is 60:40 in favour of the written

paper. Within the written paper this might be distributed thus: basic structures - 10; production - 20; receptive skills - 30.

In retrospect our aim in drawing up this kind of examination might be seen as the awakening of greater movitation among larger sections of the French-learning population. This is to be done by a greater concentration on the language of daily interaction and fostering of skills with a practical application in sight.

Samples of suggested question-types may be obtained from:

Ms Maura Clancy
Alexandra College
Milltown
Dublin 6

(Please enclose stamped addressed envelope.)

VI THE WAY AHEAD

AN OUTLINE OF OFFICIAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION POLICY ON FUTURE REFORM OF THE SYLLABUS AND EXAMINATIONS

S. Ó Conghaile
Modern Languages Inspector
Department of Education

(The following is a summary of the main points made in the course of an address given by Mr S. Ó Conghaile, Modern Languages Inspector.)

Mr Ó Conghaile began his address to the Convention by expressing thanks to the chairperson of the session, Mrs Corinna Lonergan, Department of Italian, Trinity College. He also expressed thanks to the Organizing Committee of the National Modern Languages Convention for their considerable efforts in organizing the Convention, which was an undoubted success and an occasion of major importance for foreign language teaching in Ireland.

Mr Ó Conghaile went on to say that the organization of the National Modern Languages Convention at this time was extremely appropriate in the light of the many changes currently being proposed for the teaching of foreign languages in the Irish educational system. On the previous evening the Minister for Education, Mr John Boland T.D., had confirmed that plans to implement oral examinations and new syllabuses would go ahead in 1985 and this, said Mr Ó Conghaile, had important implications for all those concerned with foreign language teaching. In order to ensure that the proposals for change were implemented successfully, communication and coordination among all the interested parties - the Department of Education, teachers' associations, teachers' unions, school managements etc. - would be essential. In this context Mr Ó Conghaile mentioned the difficulties that had been experienced some twenty years previously, when audio-visual methodology for the teaching of languages had first been introduced into Ireland. He expressed the view that many of these difficulties had resulted precisely from a lack of communication between the interested parties.

For its part, Mr Ó Conghaile continued, the

Department of Education was extremely conscious of the need for communication and coordination. The recently re-convened Syllabus Committees for foreign languages provided the means to communicate opinions and exchange views in relation to syllabus content and examination formats. The Department also held the view that the deliberations of the Committees should be communicated to the body of language teachers and had endeavoured to do this through the in-service courses it provided. Mr Ó Conghaile then referred to other problems facing the Syllabus Committees. In deciding on the content of language syllabuses and the form of examinations the Committees had to consider the views and the position of all the teachers whose work would be affected by such decisions. This might entail steering a middle course between, on the one hand, the position of those teachers for whom a change in syllabus, teaching practices and examinations would pose problems and, on the other hand, those who saw the clear need for more radical reform of the syllabus and examinations. The fact was, said Mr Ó Conghaile, that great differences in attitude existed among the members of the language teaching profession and the Syllabus Committees would have to take account of all positions and all attitudes. A further problem facing the Committees was the time-scale on which all proposed developments would have to be achieved. 1985 had been agreed as the year in which the oral component would be incorporated into a new-style examination, which meant that notice to that effect would have to be sent to schools in 1983. The implications of this deadline for the Syllabus Committees had been that the Committees had had to concern themselves first and foremost with the structure of the examination and had not had time to devote as much attention as they would wish to the question of syllabus content.

Having described in some detail the workings of the re-convened Syllabus Committees, Mr Ó Conghaile then outlined the attitude and position of the Department of Education in respect of the types of changes and suggestions being put to it by the Syllabus Committees. He made it clear that the need for change was keenly felt at all levels within the Department of Education from the Minister down. This was evident from the position adopted by the present Minister for Education, Mr John Boland T.D., and by his predecessor, Mr John Wilson T.D., who had in fact introduced the new proposals in the first

instance. At other levels within the Department of Education this positive attitude towards change had been reflected in the decision of the Department to give recognition to the I.T.E. Modern Languages Project and in the establishment of a liaison committee made up of members of the Department and members of the I.T.E. Project's co-ordinating committee.

Mr Ó Conghaile pointed out that there were, however, a number of constraints on the Syllabus Committees in relation to what they could suggest for syllabuses and examination formats in modern languages. The first was that the Minister for Education and his Department must ultimately carry responsibility for all syllabuses and examinations which they approved. This involved ensuring that in any new syllabus and examination system educational standards were maintained for the purpose of university and third-level entrance requirements and for the purpose of international recognition of Irish public examinations. Another constraint was the administrative one: any changes proposed had to be workable within the present educational system. Inevitably, finance was also mentioned by Mr Ó Conghaile as a major constraint. The cost of introducing new syllabuses and examinations which would incorporate an oral/aural component would be enormous, and although the Department was undoubtedly committed to this expenditure, nevertheless there would be some limitations on the amounts of money available. This might have some effect on the possible structuring of an oral test, which would constitute a very cost-intensive part of the total examination. The Department would be obliged to impose some financial constraints, particularly at a time when cutbacks in every sector of the public service were being contemplated.

Mr Ó Conghaile's description of developments in relation to changes in syllabus and examinations had been made in the context of the present system of Department of Education Syllabus Committees. He now turned his attention to the possibility of syllabus reform occurring in a different context. Referring to the proposal made by the Minister for Education in a speech in the Senate on 29 October 1981, when he had talked about his intention to set up an independent Curriculum and Examinations Board, Mr Ó Conghaile pointed out that it highlighted the

need felt in many quarters for a more radical reform of the entire second level syllabus. Moreover, this speech by Mr Boland contained many elements that were to be found in the White Paper on Educational Development which had been published in 1980 by Mr Boland's predecessor, Mr John Wilson - which surely indicated that a fundamental overhaul of the second level syllabus was being seriously considered by both the major political parties.

Mr Ó Conghaile then repeated some of the points made by Mr Boland in the Senate speech which he felt gave indications of general thinking and orientations in this area. First, there was a need for greater flexibility in curriculum and examinations in order to cater for children of different abilities and backgrounds. In particular, there was a need for an Intermediate examination which would assess students of different levels of ability as compared with the present Intermediate examination, which assessed or attempted to assess students across the entire ability range. The new examination should try and assess at three levels - higher, ordinary and basic. Furthermore, schools needed to be given the opportunity to experiment with different kinds of curricula and they should therefore have the means to test these curricula through an alternative system of examinations. At a higher level, the Leaving Certificate examination put a lot of pressure on teachers and pupils alike through its emphasis on the points system. This pressure might be alleviated somewhat if in addition to a re-structured Leaving Certificate there were a National Matriculation Examination which would take place one year after the Leaving Certificate and which would be a university entrance examination. At all levels of the second level system, however, there was a need for experimentation with systems of school-based and continuous assessment which would give more participation to the teacher and which might eventually be introduced as an alternative or supplement to the present form of examining. Finally, there was the possibility that the composition of the Syllabus Committees might be reviewed. At the present time only educational bodies and teachers' unions had representation, and it might be desirable to have representatives from other sectors such as industry, management etc.

If the proposals mentioned by Mr Boland, or similar proposals, were introduced, said Mr Ó Conghaile, they

would have far-reaching consequences for all aspects of language teaching. He referred to two aspects in particular which would have to be considered, namely pre-service and in-service training of foreign language teachers. With regard to pre-service training, the question of the oral competence of foreign language teachers was of the highest importance if the teachers were to teach a syllabus which stressed oral/aural skills. He applauded the fact that the language departments in the universities were very much aware of this question and that considerable changes had been made in recent years to ensure that the acquisition of language skills was an explicit aim of B.A. programmes. The other aspect to pre-service training was the methodological training of foreign language teachers in the context of the Higher Diploma in Education courses. Mr Ó Conghaile said that in his experience of visiting schools he had been led to believe by many of the young teachers that they felt they had not had enough experience and training in language teaching methodology. Their training in the areas of philosophy of education and comparative education, whilst worthwhile, had not helped them to cope adequately with classroom problems. It might be the case that too much was being attempted in too short a time in the Higher Diploma in Education courses. With regard to this problem Mr Ó Conghaile pointed out that the Department of Education was aware of the many difficulties with pre-service training in all areas and that it intended setting up a committee to look at all aspects of the problem. Such a committee already existed for second level in-service training. The Minister for Education had set up a committee with members from the professional bodies, the universities and the teachers' unions to look at the needs and to make recommendations in this area. This committee was still sitting and would soon make its report. The current financial provision for in-service training for foreign language teachers was in the region of £17,000 or £18,000, a sum which was, according to Mr Ó Conghaile, hardly sufficient to mount an adequate programme. Given that new syllabuses and oral examinations were now inevitable, a much more complete in-service programme together with better support structures would clearly have to be envisaged.

Mr Ó Conghaile concluded by reiterating how welcome it had been to have the opportunity to address the Convention.

VII A COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH TO EXAMINATIONS

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Introductory

In this paper I want to consider from a communicative perspective what criteria the public examinations in modern languages should meet, what kind of exercises they should contain, and how the performance of candidates should be assessed. In order to do this it is necessary first to address three wider issues: the communicative syllabus; the communicative approach to teaching; and (briefly) the findings of some recent research into second language acquisition. In everything I say I shall have the Intermediate and Leaving Certificate exams in mind, not as they are but as they might be.

The communicative syllabus

It is impossible to discuss examinations for long without also discussing syllabus. The I.T.E. Modern Languages Project for Post-Primary Schools began because of widespread dissatisfaction not so much with the Department of Education's syllabus as with the public examinations. At first there was a tendency among members of the project to believe that the problem could be solved by designing a different form of examination; but soon enough it became clear that a more satisfactory examination could only be arrived at on the basis of a more satisfactory syllabus. That insight is fundamental to the I.T.E. Project's work towards defined-content syllabuses in French, German, Spanish and Italian and towards the development of appropriate learning materials in those four languages. What I have to say here depends no less crucially on the same insight: in order to be at all satisfactory an examination must stand in a clear and explicit relation to the syllabus it is meant to examine; and in order to be of any use to the examiner the syllabus (at any rate in the case of a foreign language) must be fully defined. Furthermore, such a syllabus is the best way of protecting teacher and pupils from domination by the examination.

The first stage in the definition of any syllabus is to agree on general aims and objectives. Why do we teach foreign languages in our schools? Surely not only in order to furnish pupils with the examination skills necessary to gain them a pass in the Intermediate or Leaving Certificate. Surely

the teaching of any foreign language must seek to promote the pupil's social and cognitive development in general by enabling him to use the particular language as a medium of communication. This not very startling thought underlies the so-called communicative approach to the definition of language syllabuses which has been fostered by the Council of Europe's Threshold Level project and has provided the main inspiration for the I.T.É. Modern Languages Project. From a statement of general aims and objectives it is possible to proceed to a specification of the language behaviour that successful learners should be capable of; and from there to an elaboration of the language that learners should know, arranged according to the categories of Functions (what learners should be able to do in the target language), Notions (the general concepts they should be able to handle), Topics (the subjects they should be able to refer to), and Situations (the situations in which they should be able to operate). Syllabuses of this kind are innovatory in their attempt to provide a detailed description of the language to be learned in terms of communicative use rather than grammatical form.

It is important to make clear that despite the many successes it can already claim, the communicative approach to syllabus definition (and by extension to teaching and examining) is still very much in its infancy. A great deal of work remains to be done on the theory of communicative competence, which underpins the whole enterprise, and on the elaboration and interrelation of the various categories of definition that are used in syllabuses. I believe that language teaching and language examinations urgently need a defined-content syllabus designed according to communicative principles. But any such syllabus drawn up in the light of present knowledge (for example, the reference syllabuses that are being prepared by the I.T.É. Modern Languages Project) will soon need to be revised in the light of new research. We should all - teachers, researchers, the Department of Education - welcome this quickly changing situation as a sign of vitality and not turn our backs on it because it brings more work and a measure of administrative uncertainty.

The I.T.É. Modern Languages Project's Skeleton Syllabus (revised version, 1980) is an attempt to outline the minimum productive competence that the successful learner should achieve in the target language by the end of his post-primary education: what he should be able to say and what he should be able to write. The unpredictability with which natural communication develops makes it impossible to define with the same precision all the language that the learner should be able to receive (that is, hear or read, and under-

stand). In any case it is fundamental to the nature of language and the human mind that we can always understand more than we can produce. The input/output theory that is embodied in mainstream audio-lingual and audio-visual language courses (where the learner is expected to reproduce all the language that he is exposed to) ignores this fact, to the great disadvantage of several generations of learners. But it is an underlying assumption of the communicative syllabus that in order to achieve the required productive competence learners must be exposed to a body of language that goes well beyond the language specified in the syllabus.

Communicative language teaching

Now a syllabus that defines the learning task primarily in terms of the achievement of a minimum level of communicative competence demands to be taught in such a way that efficiency in communication has priority over correctness of form. This is not to say that formal accuracy is irrelevant or unimportant; and it is certainly not to say that learners should be left to deduce the grammar of the target language from the variety of forms and structures they are exposed to. The communicative approach has nothing against the explanation of grammatical points by whatever means the teacher finds most successful. But it is vitally important that grammar should be taught not in isolation and for its own sake, but always in relation to language in use, always within a context of communicative activities.

The priority given to language in use helps to explain why communicative learning materials must seek to meet certain criteria of authenticity. Communication takes place only when meaning is produced and received, and this means that the learning process must occupy itself centrally with activities that are genuinely meaningful. As soon as the question of authenticity is raised in relation to language teaching, the point is made that three years or five years in the foreign language classroom can never be very like using the foreign language in the country where it is native. The classic answer to this objection is that the classroom and the activities that go on in it have their own authenticity: they are no less real in their own terms than Frenchmen buying railway tickets or Germans going to the theatre. In recent years much attention has been given to classroom discourse, the language used to manage activities in the classroom; the point being that the use of the target language for purposes of classroom management is directly meaningful to teacher and pupils. Classroom discourse has what I shall call first-order authenticity; it involves the immediate activities of teacher and pupils and is not concerned with

the future language behaviour of learners outside the classroom. As regards the activities that go on within the framework established by classroom discourse, these will usually involve role-play and problem-solving. It has often been argued that no learner should be asked to assume a role that he is unlikely to have to assume in the country where the target language is native. One can see the point of this argument: role-play activities can go badly wrong if they are organized in such a way that participants feel foolish or inadequate in the role they have been assigned. Nevertheless, the argument can be carried too far. If language learning is to contribute to the learner's cognitive and social development it must not confine him to a limited set of tourist roles. Learning activities will serve the communicative end if they promote the production and reception of fully contextualized meaning; and they will do this if they engage the learner's interest to the extent of engaging his personality. These role-play and problem-solving activities possess what I shall call second-order authenticity: the activities of teacher and pupils are authentic in the present to the extent that they imply the possibility of successful replication in the future.

The communicative approach and research into second language acquisition

As I have described it, the communicative approach to learning materials and the teaching/learning process is a sustained attempt to fulfil the basic principles set out in the communicative syllabus. It also coincides with the findings of much recent research into second language acquisition among older children and adults. These findings may be summarized in Stephen Krashen's view that we achieve competence in a foreign language partly by learning, which is a conscious analytic process, and partly by acquiring, which is a largely subconscious process that takes place as we use the target language to receive and convey meaning. In Krashen's view subconscious acquisition appears to be "far more important" than conscious learning (1981, p.1). It is worth quoting Krashen's definition of acquisition to show how close his theoretical position is to the communicative approach to language teaching as I have described it:

> Language acquisition is very similar to the process children use in acquiring first and second languages. It requires meaningful interaction in the target language - natural communication - in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding. (1981, p.1)

Elsewhere Krashen writes:

> ... the best language lessons may be those in which real communication takes place, in which an acquirer understands what the speaker is trying to say. ..... We teach language best when we use it for what it was designed for: communication. (1981, pp.10f.)

If Krashen is right in assigning more importance to acquisition than to learning, then language teaching must provide the learner with strategies that enable him to come to grips with the target language as he encounters it, so that he can acquire subconsciously as his attention is focussed on the reception and production of meaning.

A summary of the argument so far and its implication for examinations

The communicative language syllabus proposes that language should be taught as a medium of communication and that the learner's aim should be to achieve communicative competence in the target language. The communicative approach to language teaching and learning materials places great stress on authentic activities that promote the reception and production of meaning; and in this it coincides with the theoretical view that mastery in a second language is achieved by subconscious acquisition as well as by conscious learning. Within this perspective examinations too must concentrate on language as a medium of communication. They must present candidates with tasks that have genuine meaning beyond the limits of the exam, which means that they must be concerned to satisfy criteria of authenticity in the same way as learning materials and activities.

Limiting the range of the examinations

So what does a communicative examination look like? How much of it is oral and how much written? And what types of exercise does it contain? Within my present compass it is possible to answer these questions only in rather general terms. But before I attempt to do that much I want to suggest that the scope of the exams could usefully be controlled by employing the distinction between short-turn and long-turn communication. This distinction derives from the fact that participants in any communicative event take turns and that these turns are fundamentally of two types. In a short-turn interaction the participants collaborate in the production of meaning through question and answer, statement and response. In long-turn communication by contrast one

participant assumes sole responsibility for the development of meaning, though during his turn he may be interrupted or prompted by other participants.

A moment's introspection should be enough to persuade you that most of the communication we voluntarily get involved in is short-turn; and a moment's reflection should persuade you that the learner of a foreign language needs to be able to handle short-turn interactions in order to be able to cope in the foreign-language environment. This is not only a matter of knowing how to ask the way, buy a train ticket, get efficient service in a restaurant. It also includes a wide range of social contacts and extends to utterances and texts that appear at first to be long turns but are actually sequences of short turns in which a second person's responses are replaced by a set of unspoken but clearly understood conventions. I am thinking, for example, of a curriculum vitae, in which information is ordered as if in response to a succession of questions ("Where were you born?", "Where were you educated?", etc.). Genuine (or open-ended) long turns are a very different matter from short turns. Most of us take long turns in our first language only when we are compelled to (required to attend for an interview, made to write an essay) or specially want to (in talking or writing about a hobby or some other special concern or interest). In order to sustain a long turn we need linguistic skill, but we also need structured information. It is unlikely that many foreign language learners whose learning stops with their schooling will be required to handle long turns in naturally arising communication.

I believe that the distinction between short and long turns has a lot to offer the writer of language syllabuses and the designer of language examinations. The behavioural objectives which underlie the communicative syllabus I have briefly described will characteristically require that the successful learner should be able to handle a wide range of short-turn interactions: that is, a wide range of communication in which the responsibility for developing meaning will always be shared with at least one other participant; and where the learner will always be able to use repair techniques (requests for clarification or repetition, attempts to say it again in other words, even despairing gesture) in order to keep the channels of communication open. The same behavioural objectives will probably mention letters and perhaps other kinds of discursive writing but are nevertheless likely to be imprecise as regards long turns. However, common sense and the natural gulf between receptive and productive competence suggest that the successful learner cannot be expected to handle a very wide range of open-ended long turns. It would seem appropriate that candidates for

the Intermediate Certificate and the ordinary level Leaving Certificate should be required to demonstrate the ability to participate productively only in short-turn and formulaic long-turn communication. Open-ended long-turn communication would be a suitable requirement for the higher level Leaving Certificate, which is a prerequisite for most university language courses, provided it were confined to a limited and clearly stated range of topics. If properly conducted this activity is characterized by first-order authenticity: the pupil is here and now using the target language to extend the range of his studies.

The structure and content of communicative examinations and the assessment of candidates

I have already made the point that the communicative approach to language teaching is in its infancy, and this is specially true as regards tests and examinations. But as I have also suggested, the general principles are clear enough: the examination must seek to assess the candidate's communicative ability; thus it must consist of tasks which have meaning and purpose outside the examination room.

Oral examinations

Most of the short-turn communication required of the successful learner is face-to-face oral interaction. This means that an oral exam is not just a desirable adjunct to a written exam; it inevitably assumes a central role in the examining process and the chief means of assessing the candidate's productive ability. It is a matter of detailed consideration and fine balance - and thus beyond my present brief - how long an oral should be and how much weight it should be given relative to the written exam. But it is clear that the oral's determining feature should be authentic interaction; that is, the examiner should collaborate with the candidate in developing meaning. This is emphatically different from the question-and-answer structure of traditional oral exams, in which the candidate is forced to take an open-ended long turn and the examiner's role is to prompt until he is satisfied that nothing more can be squeezed out of the candidate. The discussion of the Department of Education's pilot oral examination in French published recently in the FTA Bulletin (Clancy, Varilly, McDermott and Ruane, 1981) focussed very clearly on this problem. One way of overcoming the problem would be for the candidate and the examiner to extract personal information from one another in the first part of the oral (first-order authenticity), and for subsequent parts to consist of role-play (second-order authenticity), with an equal distribution of initiative between

candidate and examiner. For example, the examiner might assume the role of travel agent and the candidate's task would be to organize a journey - dates, times, available modes of transport, cost, etc. Alternatively the examiner might assume the role of tourist in Ireland and extract information from the candidate about his home town. The oral exam will meet the criterion of authenticity only if the candidate is permitted to use his full linguistic and para-linguistic repertoire to negotiate meaning with the examiner; that is, permitted to ask for repetitions, to try alternative formulations, to use mime and gesture in support of his verbal resources.

This kind of oral needs two examiners, one to interact with the candidate and the other to assess the candidate's performance. Candidates should be assessed according to the degree of efficiency with which they play their part in the interactions of which the oral is composed. However much they may resort to repair techniques, they succeed if they can achieve the goal of each interaction (arrange their journey, answer the foreign visitor's enquiries). It is possible to distinguish between successful candidates' performances in terms of general fluency, accuracy of phonology, morphology and syntax, structural sophistication, and pragmatic appropriateness. I believe it would be possible to work out a detailed marking scheme which would be founded on criteria of communicative efficiency and yet would fit into the system of grades currently in use for the public examinations.

Written examinations

It is possible to distinguish five kinds of pencil-and-paper task that are appropriate to examine candidates whose chief concern is short-turn interaction:

(i) Authentic short-turn tasks that involve writing. Forms that elicit various kinds of personal information from candidates can provide very useful comprehension and production tasks; it is important, for instance, that candidates in German should write their date of birth and not their father's occupation in response to the cue "Geburtsdatum". Forms can also be used in conjunction with other materials, for example, a job application form with a curriculum vitae and a job description; the candidate's task being to apply for the job. Another example of this kind of task is the formulaic long turn in the shape of a point-by-point answer to a letter. If the task involves information about the candidate himself it is characterized by first-order authenticity; if it involves role-play it is characterized by second-order authenticity.

(ii) Problem-solving tasks in which each stage of the problem elicits a short-turn response from the candidate. For example, candidates might be given a street plan and a series of questions about locations and directions which they would answer in note form. This kind of task too can be given a significant comprehension component. To stay with the same example, the candidate might be given a street plan and a letter from a friend asking how to find particular places (the candidate's reply could include an annotated sketch map). This kind of task is characterized by second-order authenticity.

(iii) Listening comprehension and (iv) reading comprehension exercises can test comprehension only, perhaps by a series of multiple-choice questions; alternatively they can be given a productive dimension of second-order authenticity by requiring candidates to extract information from the spoken or written text and reproduce it in appropriate form - requiring them, for example, to summarize the main points of a news bulletin or to describe tomorrow's weather on the basis of a weather forecast. Obviously the more elaborate any of these tasks become the more they lose their individual character and conform to a more general communicative model.

(v) Tasks that test grammatical competence within a clearly established framework of meaning. Candidates should not be asked to give the third person singular past historic of connaître. But they might be asked to correct and comment on errors in a short text, for example an advertisement or a short newspaper report, especially if the errors were of a kind that could lead to a breakdown in communication. Cloze tests, which require candidates to fill in the blanks in a piece of text, assess their grasp of both meaning and grammatical form.

Candidates' performance in all these tasks except the last one should be assessed in the same way as their performance in face-to-face interaction. That is, the chief criterion should be communicative efficiency, and considerations such as phonological, morphological and syntactic accuracy and pragmatic appropriateness should be used to distinguish between successful candidates.

Finally there is the question of assessing candidates' competence in the open-ended long-turn communication that I have suggested is appropriate only to the higher level Leaving Certificate. Four or five topics might be prescribed for treatment of this kind; each topic might be defined by a suitable prescribed text; and candidates might be required to prepare one or two topics. The written exam could then

present an extract from the prescribed text and require that candidates exploit it in some kind of discursive treatment. The criteria by which the candidate's open-ended long-turn performance is to be judged should again relate to communicative efficiency. But they will be somewhat different from those used to judge short-turn interactions and formulaic long turns; for in order to sustain a long turn open-endedly we must manipulate a given lexical complex in a meaningful way, and this requires extended syntactic and structural as well as lexical control. Syntax is hardly irrelevant to the assessment of short-turn communication; any utterance will be understood to the extent that it approximates to the syntactic norms of the language in which it is made. But in long-turn communication syntactic relations within sentences cumulatively establish the larger structures without which extended discourse can have no meaning.

Conclusion

I have spoken about examinations in relation to a defined-content syllabus and a communicative approach to language teaching. All the most important recent developments in language teaching have arisen under the umbrella of the communicative approach; and the Department of Education is taking a keen interest in the progress of the I.T.É. Modern Languages Project. The indications that have emerged from the recently established Syllabus Committees for French suggest that the new examinations at present under discussion may contain at least some of the elements I have been describing. We are living in exciting times for language teaching and everyone connected with it. The price we pay for that privilege is rapid change, which tends to cause anxiety and breathlessness in many. We must hope that our national system will be flexible enough to allow examination forms to evolve, perhaps far beyond the models I have outlined, in response to continuing developments in syllabus, learning materials, and classroom activities. For that is the correct order or priority: exams must follow the dictates of teaching; they must not, as at present, act as negative constraints on teacher and pupil alike.

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VIII SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP REPORTS

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The Convention participants were divided into fifteen groups for the workshop session. Selection was on a random basis, as it was felt that mixed groups composed of teachers of different languages, from different types of schools and from institutions of different levels would make for more interesting and informal discussion.

The groups without exception reported that their general reaction to the Convention was favourable.

Six of the groups said that what they most appreciated was the comprehensive scope of the Convention, the coming together of teachers of different languages, the discovery of common ground - and common problems too. Two groups mentioned their appreciation of the information aspect of the Convention and individual groups referred to the good organization and to the opportunity of talking to one's colleagues.

With regard to the content of the programme, four of the groups welcomed the presentation of the communicative approach for its emphasis on the use of language in real everyday situations and felt it would motivate the learners and lead to better teaching and testing especially of the spoken language. Three groups referred to the practical approach taken towards language teaching. There was praise for the highlighting of the negative aspects of language teaching and of the need for change and for the relevance and honesty of the speakers.

Session II on Friday evening was found to be valuable because of the practical justification it offered for the teaching of languages (three groups referred to this), all the more so as it was non-teachers who were speaking (two groups). It was seen to demonstrate the need for the minority languages and for many other changes in language teaching, including a greater emphasis on evening classes.

The Saturday programme as a whole was praised. Peter Green's lecture was found to be excellent (three groups). The I.T.É. project presented by Joe Sheils was considered to be very encouraging (four groups) especially as it was geared towards the Irish classroom, was suitable for pupils across the ability range and as teaching materials are already available. The reports from the Syllabus Committees

were appreciated (two groups) with particular mention of the French and German groups. There was praise for the openness and honesty of S. Ó Conghaile's speech and for the interest which he always shows in modern language teaching. There was favourable reaction to David Little's paper as providing many useful points on communicative testing (two groups).

The criticism most frequently made was that the programme was overloaded and that there was no time for questions and discussion (twelve groups).

In Session II on Friday evening, it was felt that there were too many speakers (two groups) and it was somewhat repetitious (two groups). Two groups mentioned that the reports from industry neglected the lot of working-class pupils; another two groups regretted that there had been no representative from tourism; and a further two groups were dismayed that no one argued the case for Spanish at this session. The neglect of French-speaking countries other than France was criticized and one group would have liked a fuller account of careers in translating. The fear was expressed that industry and other vocational sectors might have too much influence on language teaching in the future.

Other criticisms to do with individual papers were the lack of an official link between the I.T.É. project and the Department of Education's Syllabus Committees, the somewhat discouraging tone of the contribution from the Department's inspector, and a certain unease about the administration of oral examinations with the communicative approach. On a more practical note, the quality of the transparencies for the overhead projector was faulted.

More general points made were that not enough account was taken of the practical constraints in some secondary schools (two groups); that there was no mention of the fact that Irish is the second language for the majority of our pupils; that there was too much emphasis on pupils with third-level ambitions. From the organizational point of view, it was felt that the publishers' exhibition was badly placed and inadequately staffed and that details of the language associations should have been included in the documentation.

In order to reorientate their teaching in the light of what they had heard at the seminar, the majority of the teachers said that the practical support which would be most necessary for them was in the area of teacher training. Thirteen groups mentioned this, two groups specifying better initial training but the majority looking for in-service

courses. In-service courses for the minority languages were mentioned in particular. Other details were that the courses should be taught by native speakers, that they should be held at times other than the week-end, that teachers should get official release for these courses, and that part-time teachers should be allowed to attend. The need for improved courses in language and linguistics for undergraduates was mentioned as was the need for a tutor-monitor system for young teachers.

Another topic which received considerable attention was teacher exchanges. Four groups called for an increase in these with a further group seeking the right to regular sabbatical leave. Closely related to this, four groups also wanted the assistant scheme extended.

Six groups in all referred to the need for more teaching resources and equipment, two of the groups looking for well-equipped resources centres in particular and another making the general suggestion that the Teachers' Centres should provide more support. There were four requests for more inspectors/advisers with a general request for more drive and financial assistance from the Department of Education. The Department, Vocational Education Committees and other institutions were also asked to have a more flexible commitment towards modern languages and, for example, to allow school trips abroad to be taken during term time.

Three groups called for a change in the present syllabus, a further three groups called for a change in the examinations, with a plea for an examination which would test a communicative syllabus and not dominate the teaching. Two groups sought a reduction in class numbers. Individual groups mentioned the need to separate the post-primary terminal examination from university entrance and the need for an extra year at school for those aspiring to university.

It was said that the language teachers should get together within each school to decide on common policies. Language associations were asked to hold more local meetings and teachers were urged to join these associations. They were also urged to get together locally to work on materials and to build up a bank of such materials.

When it came to making other suggestions not necessarily connected with the Convention, many groups again commented on the examinations. It was proposed that there should be a lower course resembling a less academic Intermediate Certificate course for less able learners; that there should be a commercial option at Leaving Certificate; that at oral examinations there should be two teachers present, one to

conduct the conversation, the other to mark (and ways should be sought to compensate for nervousness); that at all examinations the levels across the languages should be standardized, especially for the sake of Spanish. The present literary course at Leaving Certificate was said to be unsuitable for the majority of pupils. It was strongly urged that the Department of Education should give more information on how the examinations are corrected and also that they should improve communications by ensuring that their circulars do not arrive too late in schools.

Concern was expressed at the lack of diversification in the languages taught. It was suggested that greater use should be made of the cultural services and that the language associations should run more meetings on teachers' own experiences in the classroom and texts. Teachers were also urged to continue experimenting in order to improve their teaching.

All these suggestions were made by single groups, but there were suggestions from six of the groups that further conventions should be held. Two of the groups suggested that they should be held on a regional basis, for a longer period, that some of the speakers should be asked back to speak on their topics in greater detail, and that there should be more group work so that teachers could discuss the practical application of what they had heard in the lectures. Finally there was a suggestion (greeted with applause during the oral presentation of these workshop reports) that all school principals should be given a summary of the proceedings of the Convention.

IX CLOSING ADDRESS

David Singleton
Trinity College
Dublin

Dr Singleton formally thanked the following for their support of the National Modern Languages Convention: the Minister for Education and the Department of Education, the Provost of Trinity College, the Director of the Centre for Language and Communication Studies, H.E. the Spanish Ambassador, the Cultural Attachés of the Canadian, French, German and Italian Embassies, the French Teachers' Association, the German Teachers' Association, the Spanish Teachers' Association, the Association of Teachers of Italian, and the Modern Language Teachers' Association. He praised the dedication of the Organizing Committee, making special mention of Mary Ruane (Secretary), David Parris (Treasurer and Catering Officer) and Sean Feerick (Organizer of the Publishers' Exhibition). He also expressed gratitude to the group of Trinity H.Dip.Ed. student helpers, to those who had been responsible for registration, and to all who had in any way contributed to or participated in the Convention. He went on to say:

Now, ladies and gentlemen, it is my task to draw proceedings to a close and to dismiss you with all courtesy. Before doing so I should like to make just three brief points.

What we heard from the Minister last night and from Mr Ó Conghaile earlier this afternoon should be enough to convince us that there is a strong feeling abroad in official circles that the communicative dimension of the second level modern language curriculum and examinations needs to be greatly enhanced. I think we should be clear that this is no ephemeral or party-political caprice. The mood for change existed long before the last general election and will undoubtedly continue to exist long after the next. Why should this be? Simply because there are very good reasons for considering changes at this time - general educational reasons, reasons having to do with the practical needs of the country, and reasons having to do with what we now know about the second language acquisition process.

Your attendance at this Convention and the way you

have reacted to what you have heard indicates clearly that within the body of language teachers there is a very favourable attitude towards the kinds of changes envisaged by official thinking. These changes, it should be emphasized, draw on the same general ideas and principles as the proposals you heard today from Peter Green, Joe Sheils and David Little.

It seems then that what we have is - for once - some unity of purpose between the Department of Education, its language teachers, and those carrying out research in the area of applied linguistics. This may represent a golden opportunity - perhaps a unique opportunity - to inaugurate not just a specific set of reforms, but mechanisms by which the reforming process can be built into the system. May I therefore suggest to you that you consider this Convention not as an isolated event which is about to end, but as part of something which should continue as long as foreign languages are taught here.

Thank you for your participation. May I wish you a very pleasant (and henceforth less exacting) weekend!